

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick**

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#### SUMMARY

The novels of Ford Madox Ford were the subject of a revival of critical attention in the 1960's and interest in his work culminated in the recent publication of a lengthy critical biography (Wizener, 1971). The value of these studies lay primarily in their elucidation of the various techniques Ford employed in his novels, but scarcely any notice was taken of the wider historical implications of his work. The object of this thesis, then, is to situate Ford within the cultural and political circumstances in which he wrote.

The opening chapter suggests the critical approach that will be employed, and is followed by detailed studies of Ford's major novels (Chapters 3, 5 and 7). These are flanked by shorter accounts (Chapters 2, 4, 6 and 8) of his lesser novels and of other prose works by Ford that help to illuminate the fiction. Throughout the thesis Ford's novels are treated in chronological order, and are connected with the historical and cultural pressures surrounding their author. Ford's career as a novelist spanned the period between the Boer War and the eve of the Second World War, and the thesis argues that his work is best understood as a series of responses to the major changes in English life and letters during that period. A concluding chapter examines Ford's career as a whole and the question of the relationship with both his 'modernist' contemporaries - James, Conrad, Joyce - and more traditional novelists, such as Wells and Bennett.

This study agrees with the critical consensus that Ford will chiefly be remembered for The Good Soldier and Parade's End. What is new here, however, is the attempt to place his novels within a somewhat larger historical framework.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- (A) Primary Sources  
(B) Secondary Sources

(A) Primary Sources

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Full Title</u>
<u>AL</u>	<u>Ancient Lights and Certain New Reflections, Being</u> <u>The Memories of a Young Man</u>
<u>AMCSU</u>	<u>A Man Could Stand Up -</u>
<u>BEN</u>	<u>The Benefactor, A Tale of a Small Circle</u>
<u>BSDG</u>	<u>Between St. Dennis and St. George - A Sketch of Three</u> <u>Civilisations</u>
<u>CA</u>	<u>The Critical Attitude</u>
<u>CALL</u>	<u>A Call, The Tale of Two Passions</u>
<u>COLLP</u>	<u>Collected Poems</u>
<u>CP</u>	<u>The Cinque Ports, A Historical and Descriptive Record</u>
<u>EE</u>	<u>England and the English, An Interpretation</u>
<u>EG</u>	<u>An English Girl, A Romance</u>
<u>EN</u>	<u>The English Novel from the Earliest Days to the Death</u> <u>of Joseph Conrad</u>
<u>ER</u>	<u>The English Review</u>
<u>FMB</u>	<u>Ford Madox Brown, A Record of his Life and Works</u>
<u>FQ</u>	<u>The Fifth Queen and How She Came to Court</u>
<u>FOC</u>	<u>The Fifth Queen Crowned</u>
<u>GS</u>	<u>The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion</u>
<u>GTR</u>	<u>Great Trade Route</u>
<u>HO</u>	<u>The Heart of the Country, A Survey of a Modern Land</u>
<u>HM</u>	<u>Hans Holbein the Younger, A Critical Monograph</u>



<u>HJ</u>	<u>Henry James. A Critical Study</u>
<u>HM</u>	<u>The 'Half-Moon', A Romance of the Old World and the New</u>
<u>INH</u>	<u>The Inheritors. An Extravagant Story</u>
<u>INW</u>	<u>It Was The Nightingale</u>
<u>JC</u>	<u>Joseph Conrad, A Personal Remembrance</u>
<u>LLG</u>	<u>A Little Less Than Gods, A Romance</u>
<u>LP</u>	<u>Last Post</u>
<u>LBRE</u>	<u>Ladies Whose Bright Eyes, A Romance</u>
<u>MA</u>	<u>Mr Apollo, A Just Possible Story</u>
<u>MEM</u>	<u>Mister Bosphorus and the Muses</u>
<u>MC</u>	<u>The Marsden Case, A Romance</u>
<u>MF</u>	<u>Mr Flight</u>
<u>MOL</u>	<u>The March of Literature from Confucius to Modern Times</u>
<u>MTF</u>	<u>A Mirror to France</u>
<u>MTS</u>	<u>Mightier Than the Sword</u>
<u>NC</u>	<u>The Nature of a Crime</u>
<u>NHD</u>	<u>The New Humpty-Dumpty</u>
<u>NMP</u>	<u>No More Parades</u>
<u>NP</u>	<u>New Poems</u>
<u>NYE</u>	<u>New York Essays</u>
<u>NYINA</u>	<u>New York Is Not America</u>
<u>OH</u>	<u>On Heaven and Poems Written on Active Service</u>
<u>PAN</u>	<u>The Panel, A Sheer Comedy</u>
<u>PE</u>	<u>Parade's End</u>
<u>PCR</u>	<u>The Portrait</u>
<u>IRB</u>	<u>The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, A Critical Monograph</u>
<u>PROV</u>	<u>Provence, From Minstrels to the Machine</u>
<u>PS</u>	<u>Privy Seal: His Last Venture</u>

<u>RA</u>	<u>The Rash Act</u>
<u>ROM</u>	<u>Romanoe. A Novel</u>
<u>ROS</u>	<u>Rossetti. A Critical Essay on His Art</u>
<u>RTY</u>	<u>Return to Yesterday</u>
<u>SDN</u>	<u>Some Do Not...</u>
<u>SL</u>	<u>Soul of London. A Survey of a Modern City</u>
<u>SP</u>	<u>The Spirit of the People. An Analysis of the English Mind</u>
<u>TA</u>	<u>Transatlantic Review</u>
<u>THR</u>	<u>Thus to Revisit</u>
<u>VLR</u>	<u>Vive Le Roy</u>
<u>WBTA</u>	<u>When Blood Is Their Argument. An Analysis of Prussian Culture</u>
<u>WM</u>	<u>Women and Men</u>
<u>WFM</u>	<u>When the Wicked Man</u>

(B) Secondary Sources

<u>Cassell</u>	Richard A. Cassell, <u>Ford Madox Ford - A Study of His Novels</u> (Baltimore, 1961)
<u>Gordon</u>	Ambrose Gordon, Jr., <u>The Invisible Tent: The War Novels of Ford Madox Ford</u> (Austin, 1964)
<u>Harvey</u>	David Dow Harvey, <u>Ford Madox Ford 1873/1939. A Bibliography of Works and Criticism</u> (Princeton, 1962)
<u>Hoffmann</u>	Charles G. Hoffmann, <u>Ford Madox Ford</u> (New York, 1967)
<u>Huntley</u>	H. Robert Huntley, <u>The Alien Protagonist of Ford Madox Ford</u> (Chapel Hill, 1970)
<u>Meixner</u>	John A. Meixner, <u>Ford Madox Ford's Novels - A Critical Study</u> (Minneapolis, 1962)

The damaging consequence of this bifurcation of the novel between the crystalline and the journalistic lies, for Miss Murdoch, in fiction's having neglected to furnish us with the techniques of becoming free. The requirement not met is the provision of "a renewed sense of the difficulty and complexity of the moral life and the opacity of persons."

"Against Dryness" has plainly much relevance to Miss Murdoch's own oeuvre, which increases with a remarkable annual regularity. The essay also seems, though, to be addressing itself to larger critical issues, in much the same way as the "Prefaces" of Henry James are capable of generating questions of wider import than those raised in our reading of the particular novels to which they are attached. Miss Murdoch put the issues exclusively in terms of the novel, of fiction's regretted division between the documentary and the autotelic, yet what she there claimed as true of one branch of imaginative literature is also applicable to the procedures of literary criticism itself. Thus the crystalline modern novel finds its equivalents, in the realm of criticism, among the practices of formalist New Criticism. Indeed the latter is a direct offshoot of the literary modernism of Eliot, Yeats, Pound and Joyce. Equally, a real parallel exists between the journalistic fiction and those modes of literary criticism that stress art's mimetic qualities as a reflector of external reality. One critical tradition, derived from certain aspects of Romantic doctrine, has viewed the work of art as free and separate, autonomous and self-contained. A second tradition, springing originally from Vico's Scienza Nuova, has focused attention on literature's relationship with a complex world of cultural and historical pressures. And, if the metaphor of "Against Dryness" is pursued further, Miss Murdoch would appear to have been suggesting that a literary criticism so divided was offering us too shallow a view of the work of art.

Anglo-American criticism had indeed been polarised for several decades; the trenches had been occupied in the 'twenties and 'thirties and no shortage of replacements for either side was noticeable later. Miss Murdoch's essay was a call for a cease-fire in this battle of the books, its importance deriving from her ability either to foretell the course of literary criticism from 1961 or, perhaps, subtly to influence some of the more important practitioners. Whatever the precise nature of the essay's influence, it's certainly true that the intervening fifteen years have seen significant critical energy being devoted, in Britain and in America, to the establishment of a common ground between historicist and formalist criticism. In Europe, <sup>Benjamin and, later, Goldmann</sup> had led the way, but their influence was slow to permeate English-speaking criticism: Goldmann's Le Dieu Caché (1956) wasn't translated until 1964 and his Pour Une Sociologie Du Roman (1964) remained unavailable in English until 1975. Quite independently, though, critics such as Lionel Trilling in America and W. J. Harvey in England were giving expression to a dissatisfaction with strictly formalist procedures for analysing fiction. In his "The Sense of the Past" Trilling remarked on the anti-historicism of the New Critics and Harvey similarly commented that this approach "can really do very little to help towards the understanding of extended works of fiction".<sup>4</sup> A few years later Roy Harvey Pearce was to pay New Criticism a generous tribute before concluding that, since criticism is ineluctably a mode of historical understanding, it's inadequate without an historical dimension.<sup>5</sup> And, while critics who had been reared on the received notions of formalism were coming to see the necessity of an historical dimension, so, from the other side, Marxist critics were revaluating that distrust of modernism, critical and artistic, registered by Lukács in Studies in European Realism and The Meaning of Contemporary Realism. Thus David

Cante attacks the conservatism of critics and artists on the left in having clung to Realism and Naturalism, an adherence which led them to evade dealing with "a crucial and authentic modern sensibility: self-consciousness and self-doubt".<sup>6</sup> Cante rejects both the Marxian view that form exists to facilitate content and the New Critical position, that meaning resides exclusively in form. He affirms that "both schools evidently confuse 'content' with 'subject' or 'theme', thereby forgetting that the content of a book or play is the theme mediating and mediated by the form employed". This process he has called "triadic".

In a recent survey of this rapprochement between formalists and historicists Gerald Graff noted the contribution of Cante in England and, in America, of Fredric Jameson's authoritative study, Marxism and Form, and of Goodheart's Culture and the Radical Consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Graff himself is sympathetic to these various attempts to reconcile the autonomy of art with a recognition of its social and human significance, reserving his hostile comments for what he calls the "recent radicalized aestheticism" of Gilman, Poirier and Susan Sontag. The title of Gilman's The Confusion of Realism refers to <sup>his</sup> dismissal of any "attempts to make literature a vehicle for interpreting the world, whether they be motivated by conservative or radical political goals or by old-fashioned humanistic moral concerns".<sup>8</sup> Graff is critical of this radical, post-modernist aesthetic being employed to subvert western humanism, which, to Gilman, Poirier and Sontag, is synonymous with bourgeois oppression: he accuses all three of a "contradictory fusion of aestheticism and radicalism".<sup>9</sup> For his part Graff, like Cante, holds that modernism, far from being autotelic, unconnected with history and reality, is a reflection in literature of social convulsions that provides us with a means of understanding the world in which we live. The urgent need is for criticism to

explore how "the political thrust of a literary work" is made manifest in its form as well as in its paraphraseable content. The dynamic relationship in literature between its aesthetic autonomy and its rootedness in history is, then, close to what Miss Murdoch had claimed to obtain in the moral life of the individual. If literature's task ought to be to help us rediscover "a sense of the density of our lives", then the equivalent aim for criticism is an account of the density in the life of the literary work, the real impenetrability of a verbal construct that is simultaneously free and conditioned.

Gabriel Josipovici's response to this is: "I am not an object in the world but the limits of my world".<sup>10</sup> For him the epistemological indeterminacy of so much modernist literature has no political significance whatsoever. Josipovici's argument is that what Lukacs found to be its weakness is in truth this literature's strength, and the question of whether irresolution is a mode of social criticism or an apathetic passivity cannot even be legitimately raised. Josipovici's rejection of any contact with an historicist criticism, whether liberal or Marxian, aligns him with the American radical aesthetic of Sontag and Gilman. The World and the Book is the most astringent, articulate statement of literature's absolute freedom from any external contingency, and many of its formulations are notably lucid, as, for example, the comment that modernist artists all stressed

that what they were creating were artifacts and not to be confused with life: that painting was first of all a series of brushstrokes on a flat canvas; music certain notes played by certain combinations of instruments; poetry the grouping of words on a page.<sup>11</sup>

Much of what Josipovici has said about the modernist impulse is similarly

illuminating: the work of art did certainly insist on its own status as an artifact. Thus he is surely right to claim that the modernist novel emphasises its own facticity with the aim of distinguishing itself from the reader's own habitual environment, whereas, by contrast, much earlier fiction had seen the act of perception as neutral, the world being one with the world as we are made conscious of it. The modern novel is innovative in so consistently exposing the process of its own manufacture.<sup>12</sup> And yet, while the reader will acknowledge this claim and will teach himself to distinguish between the modern novel and his customary perceptions of reality, he may surely also want to retain his belief that the artifact is still in some way an aspect of, and a product of society. Josipovici, though, claims that the modernists' assertion of art's autonomy forces us, as readers and critics, to abandon any belief that art's unilateral declaration of independence was, in fact, historically conditioned. However, we needn't accept that such an abandonment is mandatory; we can still maintain that an historical situation did lie behind what Jameson called "an apparently systematic and intellectually coherent, self-contained surface."<sup>13</sup> Thus while Josipovici is undoubtedly correct in asserting that "the modern novel draws attention to the rules which govern its own creation in order to force the reader into recognising that it is not the world", these "rules" of formal organisation aren't weakened or broken by being connected, in a relationship which it is criticism's function to lay bare, with the matrix of historical and cultural conditions in which they were formulated.<sup>14</sup> The modernist novel may have abandoned the mimetic role of classical realism, but it's difficult to perceive how the novelist's choice of alternative forms



could have been made in an historical vacuum.

The World and the Book is in no way typical of contemporary criticism in England; indeed its author is rather contemptuous of the generality of Anglo-Saxon criticism. The essay's importance, aside from its patent intelligence, lies rather in the clarity with which it presents the critical strategies of "radicalised aestheticism". Such critics - Josipovici in England or Sontag in America - are committed to an aesthetic of "crystalline" purism, uncompromising in its investment in art's autonomy. The World and the Book makes no attempt to hide its dissatisfaction with that pragmatism, the value attached to a mobile tentativeness characteristic of English studies since, say, Dryden. These qualities are implied in Malcolm Bradbury's choice of a title for another recent book on fictional aesthetics, Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel.<sup>15</sup> The centre of Possibilities would seem to lie in the implicit assent given to Miss Murdoch's Encounter essay; the book can be viewed as an attempt to work out, in terms of a poetics for fiction, what she had earlier implied. The earlier essay's style, so allusive and concentrated, is here fleshed out in a body of theoretical statements accompanied by illustrative readings of particular novels.

In his opening chapter Bradbury writes about the critical shift from the New Critical view of the novel as a poetic, symbolist form to a more recent interest in the novel's contingency and its narrative qualities. He desires to hold fast to the ground won by formalist criticism, the illumination it has generated about the dense verbal complexities of a literary text and its underlying adherence to the notion of "the freedom and the significance of the individual creative action".<sup>16</sup> This latter doctrine had been jeopardised by many of the cruder manifestations of earlier Marxian criticism, and yet Bradbury acknowledges the importance of



criticism's historical dimension when he endorses the necessity of attending to what he calls "the living life of the time and the way it generates and is observed by consciousness".<sup>17</sup> His terminology is different but Malcolm Bradbury is at one with Miss Murdoch in his recognition that the novel replicates, in a verbal structure, the ceaseless dialectic in the individual human personality between a self-sustaining separateness and an enriching, educative connectedness. Man's achievement of harmony - his sanity - corresponds to the novel's drive towards shapeliness, the perfect resolution of the external, historical pressures with those that are internal, generated within the novel itself. Neither set of pressures can, in Bradbury's view, be ignored, a total response to a novel being unachievable if we only recognise and weigh either "those characteristics which make for verbal unity, or alternatively... those which make for specificity and solidity of specification".<sup>18</sup>

Where Josipovici is exclusive, even belligerently prescriptive, Bradbury is tolerant and receptive in his search for "a more inclusive typology", "an eclectic account of the novel species as a type".<sup>19</sup> He summarises Possibilities with the proposition that "the novel is determined by conditions both within the medium itself and outside it in life, [and literary critics] ought to be able to move freely between language and life".<sup>20</sup> And yet notwithstanding the obvious points of disagreement between the two critics, much of what they have to say about the aesthetics of modernism is remarkably similar. Thus Bradbury notes at one point that the modernist novel is distinguished from its predecessors in the genre by an innovatory self-consciousness, a radical introversion.<sup>21</sup> His terms here are rather close to some of Josipovici's formulations and the two critics only really begin to diverge when description is replaced by explanation, when Bradbury locates the roots of modernism's introspection

in its darkening suspicion of historicist thought and practice. Such a fundamental distrust, he shows, finds its artistic expression in the formal tensions of much of the literature of the 'twenties:

The feeling of surveying an existence without essence, a continuum without a structure, runs deep in the art and gives it a sense of internal strain - a certain terminal quality in the writing which reveals that it is attempting to reach towards the limits of language, the ultimate possibilities of form, the extreme of an aesthetic order beyond time and history.<sup>22</sup>

In the "radicalised aestheticism" of Gilman, Sontag and Josipovici, formal and semantic boundaries were only limited by the internal energies of the artifact itself; they were not set, as Bradbury is here implying, by the cultural, socio-linguistic possibilities of the period in which the artifact was composed.

This critical debate, whose recent polarities are marked by Possibilities and The World and the Book, has an obvious bearing on Ford Madox Ford if only because his work lies at the point of confluence between the old mimetic fiction and the new modernist impulses. Ford himself was deeply engaged with the continuing development of this movement: through his association with James and Conrad at the turn of the century, his editorship of the fine English Review and, a few years later, his connections with T. E. Hulme, Wyndham Lewis and the world of Blast. And then, after the war, he was affiliated with the Paris of Hemingway, Joyce and Transatlantic Review, before finally in his last years linking up with Southern writers such as Ransom and Tate. Nevertheless, for all these modernist connections, Ford still retained many loyalties to earlier, less self-conscious forms, so that the complaint he gave a character in one of his last novels - that "it was a mistake to have been born in the nineteenth century when the whole of your life was to be passed in the twentieth" - has some bearing on his own career.<sup>23</sup>

Between the 'minuties when he first began writing fiction to his death in the late 'thirties Ford's existence was always close to those decisive shifts that were occurring in the means of fictional representation and which Frank Kermode has summarised as the "switch of attention from the environment to the instrument".<sup>24</sup> This modulation Kermode claims to be the most distinctive characteristic of twentieth-century thought, making itself felt in the novel when writers

began to concern themselves, not with the formalities by which older novelists authenticated their stories, but with the form of the novel itself, so that all manner of things which had seemed of the essence of the novel - chronological narration, 'depth' in character, and so on - were seen as

inert and decorative, and all the effort went, not into the direct rendering of the world, but into the refinement of the instrument. The end of this story is the position that the old virtues of condure, etc., are lies and that the novel must make its way without the aid of the old, shared belief that its arbitrariness somehow represent a knowable world.<sup>25</sup>

Ford was indeed one of the chief spokesmen for, and exponents of, this development in fiction. Nevertheless, while these concerns with the "refinement of the instrument" were always strongly held by Ford, it shouldn't be forgotten that he continued to assent to the 'Victorian' belief in the novel's cultural importance, in fiction's public responsibilities. Each of Ford's fullest and most serious critical ventures - The English Novel, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, the editorial columns of his English Review -

is grounded in the belief that major fiction ought to have as one of its ambitions the illumination of the world in which it was written. Frequently indeed Ford went further, claiming that the novel was now the only way of telling us how, in the instability and impermanence of modern life, other men lived. The function of the novel, as he once put it, is to offer the reader "a better view of the complicated predicaments that surround him", and, while it is true that Ford stressed the necessity for a technical sophistication and formal self-consciousness absent from the bulk of nineteenth-century fiction, these qualities had always to be directed towards the illumination of the writer's environment.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed one can perhaps even suggest that Ford's importance lay centrally in his perception that the forms chosen by the novelist to register his own world were themselves a mode of historical and cultural understanding. In the "Preface" to Collected Poems Ford claimed that for twenty-five years he had sought to "register my own times in terms of my

own time", and had encouraged other writers to do likewise. It's conceivable that Ford, usually so devoted to the metaphorical, was here telling the plain truth: that the literary "terms" generated by a particular age, the forms of a novel's plot and characterisation, were as historically conditioned as its political institutions, say, or its laws of economic growth. In this intuition Ford discovered a means of uniting the inward-looking formal concerns of literary modernism with the historicist legacies from the previous century. He was, we may agree, "one of the first novelists to realize the possibilities of the cognitive novel, of the inseparable interaction between the purely technical devices at the writer's command and that external history which makes up an important part of his materials. In Ford's best work, in The Good Soldier and the Tietjens novels, the historical pressures of the external world and the formal, literary means of rendering them were shown to be analogous. In the "cognitive novel" of this kind the novelist's autonomy, his individual creative power, is preserved alongside a recognition that the artist only has his being within certain historical contexts.

A critical account of Ford Madox Ford which is in sympathy with fiction's ability to be at the same time both free and separate as well as contingent and related will reveal its loyalties quite speedily. Thus the following chapters adhere to a chronological order which attempts to lay bare the similitudes between different works of the same period, in preference to generic likenesses between works of different periods. All the early-Edwardian works, that

is to say, are treated together, irrespective of whether they may be called 'historical novels' or 'social satires'. Similarly, some discussion of non-fictional prose is provided wherever such material seems to elucidate the contemporaneous fiction. Some earlier accounts of Ford have appeared to assume that his career was a lengthy search for techniques to express a vision of man's relation with his fellows that was essentially static; that fictional forms were being developed to mediate a philosophy of life that was, as Ford might have put it himself, "marmoreal". We have been invited, in such readings, to believe that the novels "indicate that the basic assumptions of Ford's criticism of society remained consistent throughout his career" and that his "pessimistic attitude toward his times remained constant", only the atmosphere of his novels altering.<sup>29</sup> On the contrary, it would appear from all the extant evidence that Ford's 'vision' was, like many people's, in constant change; and that his fiction matched this development in his beliefs. Throughout, our assumption will be that the political thrust of a novel is not simply deducible from the work's separable and paraphraseable elements of plot, nor is it a merely adventitious and superficial element in the work of art. Rather do we share, with Eugene Goodheart, the view that

the political implication of a work is bound up with the imaginative disposition of the artist ....[and that] his development as an artist, which includes matters of language, characterization, narrative method, may also be a matter of politics.<sup>30</sup>

A scrupulous detailed attention to the techniques employed by Ford in his major novels shouldn't militate against any discussion of them as historical documents, responses of one writer to his own world. Attention paid to literature's existence in a public realm must never be "discontinuous with an aesthetic awareness of the literary process".<sup>31</sup>

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

- 1 "Against Dryness," Encounter, XVI, 1 (January 1961), 16/20.
- 2 Ibid., 18.
- 3 Ibid., 20.
- 4 Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (London, 1951);
- 5 W. J. Harvey, Character and the Novel (London, 1965), pp. 199/200.
- 6 Roy Harvey Pearce, Historicism Once More (Princeton, 1969), pp. 39/40.
- 7 David Cante, "Realism and Commitment," Times Literary Supplement, 3604 (March 26, 1971), 347/8. The topic is treated at greater length in the same author's The Illusion (London, 1971).
- 8 Gerald Graff, "Aestheticism and Cultural Politics," Social Research, XL (Summer 1973), 311/43.
- 9 Ibid., 323.
- 10 Ibid., 329.
- 11 The World and the Book (London, 1971).
- 12 Ibid., p. 191.
- 13 Ibid., p. 148.
- 14 Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton, 1971), p. 381.
- 15 Josipovici, op. cit., p. 298.
- 16 London, 1973.
- 17 Possibilities, p. 26.
- 18 Loc. cit.
- 19 Ibid., p. 278.
- 20 Loc. cit.
- 21 Ibid., p. 281. This critical oscillation between literature and life is described as "tacking" by Jeremy Hawthorn in an important recent contribution to critical theory, Identity and Relationship (London, 1973).
- 22 Bradbury, op. cit., pp. 81/2.
- 23 Ibid., p. 90.
- 24 RA, p. 28.
- 25 Frank Kermode, "Revolution: The Role of the Elders,"
- 26 Ihab Hassan (ed.), Liberations: New Essays on the Humanities in Revolution (Connecticut, 1971), pp. 87/99.
- 27 Ibid., p. 92.
- 28 EN, p. 24.
- 29 COLIP, p. 13.
- 30 John McCormick, Catastrophe and Imagination (London, 1957), p. 220.
- 31 Richard A. Cassell, Ford Madox Ford - A Study of His Novels (Baltimore, 1961), p. 75; John A. Meixner, Ford Madox Ford's Novels - A Critical Study (Minneapolis, 1962), p. 24.
- 32 Eugene Goodheart, Culture and the Radical Consciousness (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 82.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 82/3.



Chapter Two  
The Early Years

-1-

Ford Madox Ford was born in December 1873 in Merton, Surrey, a far cry from those spacious rural 'seats', Groby and Branshaw, in which he was to house the heroes of his best novels. Ford's father, Francis Hueffer, came from a line of prosperous Catholic printers in Munster. He had left Germany in 1869, possibly as a result of his atheistic views, to settle in London where he lived the life of a distinguished musicologist until his death in 1889. In 1872 he married Catherine, daughter of Ford Madox Brown the painter, and Ford was the eldest of their three children. <sup>1</sup> The marriage united two streams of artistic innovation, the English Pre-Raphaelite movement and the new forces in European music: Francis Hueffer founded two magazines to popularise Schopenhauer and Wagner in England. Ford was later to remark that he was "brought up in the back rooms and nurseries of pre-Raphaelism" and there is some evidence that his <sup>2</sup> childhood among artists and musicians was oppressive. Certainly it did implant in him both a lasting belief in the importance of art and, as a result of the uncomfortable brilliance of his Rossetti cousins, a suspicion of the competitiveness and rancour of artistic communities. His attitude to the Pre-Raphaelites was to remain deeply ambivalent.



In 1881 at the age of seven Ford was sent to a 'progressive' boarding-school in Folkestone, run by a German couple. He remained at school in Kent until 1889 when his father's death enforced his removal to University College School, in Gower Street. Francis Hueffer died a poor man and the family finances were now strained. Ford left school in 1890 at the age of sixteen, evidently with the ambition of becoming a musician. As a young man in London in the 1890's Ford came into contact with the Socialism of William Morris and with the world of European anarchism. He affected a black coat with a cape slung over the shoulders which floated out behind him as he walked.

This cape had been Gabriel Rossetti's and had come down to him through his grandfather; it was over thirty years old. The jacket he wore under under it was "a water-tight German forester's pilot jacket", also secondhand, and under that was a fifteen-year-old blue-linen shirt of his grandfather's and a red-satin tie. This costume, he felt, was the proper wear for a young man of Pre-Raphaelite descent who sympathized with Morris' socialism; Morris' disciples, he noted,<sup>3</sup> had much imitated Rossetti's cape.

The young Ford of this picture was clearly modelling himself on what Holbrook Jackson called the "New Dandyism" of the 'nineties, mixed with a studied, eccentric devotion to the lovable shabbiness of his grandfather.<sup>4</sup> Ford Madox Brown was to remain the strongest influence on Ford until he met Conrad in 1898.

With the painter's encouragement Ford published his first book, The Brown Owl, a fairy-story, in 1891, to be quickly followed by similar books, The Feather (1892) and The Queen Who Flew (1894). These stories, as Ford later described them, "are about Princes and Princesses and magicians and such twaddle." Yeats had founded the Irish National

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Literary Society in 1891, early evidence of the decade's 'Celtic Revival', and by choosing to write his earliest works in the genre of the fairy-story Ford was perhaps responding to the period's new interest in myth, folklore, magic and mysticism. It's equally possible that Ford, still only twenty, hadn't yet discovered his true subjects: he was later to remark upon the need<sup>6</sup> for the novelist to "live" before he began to write.

The same inexperience marked The Shifting of the Fire (1892), Ford's first novel, published when he was eighteen. It was no more credible or realistic than the fairy-stories and has been described as "almost entirely amateurish", "implausible and...absurd...written in a ludicrously elegant style."<sup>7</sup> The Shifting of the Fire was derivative of Victorian fictional melodramas—the plot is reminiscent of Hardy's early Desperate Remedies (1871)—and the full flavour of the style can be appreciated from the passage cited by Misener:

The host was fain to let them go to their rooms above. Here the air struck cold on entry, despite the fires which burned bravely, with crackling red embers, yet were they glad without more ado to doff their clothes in cold and shivering haste, thrusting<sup>8</sup> themselves between the sheets...

Both the language and the syntax are, plainly, borrowed, and Conrad's comment in 1898 that the book is "delightfully young" is more revealing of the generosity with which he was prepared to treat Ford at the beginning of<sup>9</sup> their collaboration than of the book's true merits.

The Shifting of the Fire was the only novel Ford had published before his collaboration with Conrad, though he had drafted "Seraphina", an early, unsatisfactory version of Romanos, in 1896/7. It is clear, then, that Ford had not yet developed any coherent ideas about fiction beyond, of course, the general belief in the value of art that was part of his Pre-Raphaelite heritage. Ford Madox Brown (1896) is a dutiful and professional biography of his grandfather, but it doesn't offer any evidence that Ford had

invented any revolutionary, independent views about language and art before the momentous meeting with Conrad in the autumn of 1898. At one point he describes his grandfather's professional enemies as "tares in the Brunonian wheat", and Mizener has drawn attention to other examples of the "wooden solemnity" of these early works. The writing and the clothes of the young Ford were deeply conventional and derivative.

Ford Madox Brown was written in Sussex where Ford had been living since his marriage in 1894, devoted to "the Tory conservatism, the Pre-Raphaelite medievalism, and the 'simple life' so fashionable among advanced intellectuals" of that period.<sup>11</sup> Conrad and Ford were introduced by Edward Garnett in September 1898 and it was at the former's suggestion that they soon started work on the revision of the unpublishable "Seraphina". Conrad had been advised by friends to try to find an English collaborator to help him write more fluently and correctly. Ford was also useful to him in 1898 because he was at this time "discouraged and floundering", and he benefitted from the younger man's psychological support.<sup>12</sup> For his part Ford greatly admired Conrad's gifts as a writer and, most importantly, Conrad inspired him with the settled purpose of becoming a novelist. The meeting with Conrad and the years of close friendship around the turn of the century were perhaps the most influential events of Ford's life as a novelist. The collaboration gave to Ford a sense of the discipline and architecture required of the novel that had been lacking in "Seraphina" and The Shifting of the Fire. They were to work together, intermittently, until 1908.

Whereas Ford only brought to the collaboration enthusiasm and a wholehearted, if as yet undirected, commitment to art's nobility, Conrad had already laid the foundations of his career with Almayer's Folly (1895), An Outcast of the Islands (1896) and The Nigger of the "Narcissus", serialised by Henley in 1897. He had also, with the "Preface" published at the end of The Nigger, issued his own manifesto, a statement of fiction's centrality. The "Preface", one of the seminal documents of English modernism,

primarily asserts the importance of fiction as a genre and how it may<sup>13</sup>  
"aspire ☐ to be art." Conrad said little here of the 'grammar' or  
'architecture' of particular novels; unlike James' "Preface" to What Maisie  
Knew, it is not an account of the genesis of a single story. Instead Conrad  
as at pains to justify fiction's claim to "seek ☐ the truth", to "bring ☐  
to light the truth" of human existence. The thinker, he acknowledges, does  
this by "plunging ☐ into ideas", the scientist by the investigation of facts.  
The novelist has the same aim, the discovery of truth, but he alone must  
"descend ☐ within himself" to "find ☐ the terms of his appeal."

He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder,  
to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives;  
to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the  
latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—  
to the subtle but invincible conviction of  
solidarity that knits together the loneliness of  
innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams,  
in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions,  
in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which  
binds together all humanity—the dead to the living  
and the living to the unborn.<sup>14</sup>

Ideas, facts and theories are ephemeral and demolished anew in every  
generation. Only the discoveries of the artist have a lasting validity.

In this respect indeed Conrad's "Preface" is very much a  
document of its time, a part of that reaction against positivism, that  
revulsion from ideology and abstract thought, from "the whole tendency to  
discuss human behaviour in terms of analogies drawn from natural science"<sup>15</sup>  
characteristic of European thought at the end of the nineteenth century.  
The style bears the stamp of Pater, still enormously influential in the  
'nineties. "All art...appeals primarily to the senses,...its high desire



[being] to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions", Conrad<sup>16</sup> proclaimed. The sociologists and philosophers of this decade, Conrad's 'thinkers', were similarly bent on "displac[ing] the axis of social thought from the apparent and objectively verifiable to the only partially conscious area of unexplained motivation."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, although we can place Conrad's "Preface", with its stress on the emotional and subjective bases of art, alongside the work of Freud, Bergson, Durkheim and others, it's important to remember that Conrad's main concern in the "Preface" was the liberation of art from any analogies with political or moral thought. The "worker in prose", Conrad urges, has no business responding to the reader's demand

to be edified, consoled, amused;...to be promptly improved, or encouraged, or<sup>18</sup> frightened, or shocked, or charmed....

Conrad thus distinguishes the novelist's task from the thinker's; his business is "before all, to make you see." This is a phrase that Ford was constantly to repeat as the central aim of the novelist's work, the effort to make the reader "see". Conrad's "Preface" had dissociated the novel from any prescriptive ends.

In this abandonment of explicit moral purposefulness Conrad "joined the attack...upon the nineteenth century's seduction by abstractions, by the resounding appeal of moral terms or shibboleths that had lost their basis in conduct or sincerity."<sup>19</sup> Ford who had so recently endured a Pro-Raphaelite upbringing must have warmed to this assertion of the novel's freedom from dogmatism. The association with Conrad provided Ford with the means of escaping, escorted, from the moralistic bases of Victorian aestheticism that had been impressed upon him by late-Victorian artists. The association was truly a 'rite of passage' for Ford, his introduction to artistic independence. In Henry James (1913) he was later to describe how as a young man he had been directed to find the "Profound Moral Purpose"

in that novelist, and how bewildered he had been not to discover any high seriousness.<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein, Return to Yesterday (1932) includes an episode in which Ford claims to have rebelled against his Victorian upbringing by reading comics in the cellar.<sup>21</sup> Joseph Conrad's value to Ford, then, was that he provided the younger man's truancy with the seal of respectability; he legitimised, as it were, the reading of comics. Conrad's manifesto and their conversations must have supported Ford's own 'Pre-Raphaelite' belief in art's centrality and at the same time removed any vestigial attraction to the Brotherhood's moral earnestness.

Ford became Conrad's 'secret sharer' and they devoted much of their energy over the next decade, until 1908 when they split up over The English Review, to forging a modernist poetics for the novel. In thus seeking, alongside James, to "redeem the English novel for the intelligent world", Conrad and Ford were doing work that proved their early insight into the crucial lines of development of modernism.<sup>22</sup> "In a real sense", Frederick S. Karl has noted, "they were on to what would be the entire modern movement in prose fiction and poetry."<sup>23</sup> And yet the seminal importance of their collaboration cannot be measured by the novels, Romance and The Inheritors, they jointly wrote. These are unremarkable. The real demonstration of the theories in action is only provided by the novels they published independently, by Lord Jim (1900) and Nostrano (1904) and by Ford's much later Good Soldier and Parade's End. Here are the successful, influential applications of the collaborative theory, novels of indisputable stature and originality. Students of the partnership have often conjectured about the causes of the joint novels' mediocrity and the possible influence of domestic and temperamental obstacles.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps, however, the failure of the two writers to produce any major shared novels could have been anticipated by the very terms Conrad had himself employed in the 1897 "Preface". In its second sentence this essay had defined art as "a single-minded attempt to render the

highest kind of justice to the visible universe." <sup>25</sup> 'single-minded' refers not only to the qualities of tenacity and stamina required; it also implies the importance, fundamental to the whole "Preface", Conrad attributed to the workings of the individual sensibility, the artist's descent within himself and exploration of "that lonely region of stress and strife." <sup>26</sup> Such a journey could scarcely be made in tandem; notions of loneliness and risk are central to Conrad's "Preface" and to his practice in Lord Jim and Montremo.

These two novels, then, with The Good Soldier and Parade's End, constitute the permanent value of the theories forged around the turn of the century. The partnership was committed to "the adequation of language to the thing perceived or the sensation undergone"; to the value of 'progression d'effet', the importance of every phrase, sentence and episode in the novel's cumulative power; and to "the principle of juxtaposition without copula of chapter with chapter...as the mainspring of poetic effect." <sup>27</sup> None of these theories had been laid down in Conrad's "Preface", with the exception of an undeveloped reference to the need for a novel to "carry its justification in every line." <sup>28</sup> It was only in the Conrad/Ford 'workshop' that the "Preface" was given flesh, and means found to put into practice the aspirations voiced at the end of The Vision of the "Narcissus".

There's no doubt that Ford benefitted immeasurably from his 'apprenticeship' with Conrad; nor, despite Jessie Conrad's celebrated dislike of Ford, that Conrad was thereby strengthened to complete Lord Jim and Montremo. In its short-term effects the collaboration appeared futile: both Romance and The Inheritors were critical and commercial failures. Despite these setbacks, especially painful to Ford, he was now ready to embark alone on his career as a novelist. He was now furnished, when he moved to London in 1904, with a totally serious commitment to fiction as well as with a series of formal precepts. Indeed the period of the collaboration was Ford's formative years, and he was to remain devoted to the theories the two men had established for the rest of his life. Different aspects of the theories will, it is true, be



emphasised at different times. Thus between 1909 and 1915 it will be fiction's analogies with sculpture that Ford chooses to stress among the "Preface's" ideas, whereas in the 'twenties and 'thirties he will be more alive to the novel's value as a contribution to what Conrad had called in 1897 "the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation."<sup>29</sup>

Fundamentally, though, Ford will remain wedded to his 'Impressionism'—his title and one that Conrad avoided—for the remainder of his life.<sup>30</sup>

In his memorial volume, Joseph Conrad (1924), <sup>Ford</sup> was to remark that his friend "prized fidelity, especially to adventurers, above all human virtues and saw very little of it in this world."<sup>31</sup>

Ford remained faithful to the adventurous Conrad throughout his life: in the concluding pages of his last book, The March of Literature, he will note the first and last sentences of Heart of Darkness as examples of fictional 'impressionism'.<sup>32</sup>

This was the abiding effect on Ford of the collaboration at the turn of the century.

"The opening of the twentieth century finds us all, to the dismay of the old-fashioned individualist, 'thinking in communities'". So wrote the Webbs in their influential essay, "Lord Rosebery's Escape from Houndsditch", in September 1901, the year that also saw the publication of The Inheritors. The "Houndsditch" essay promulgated the doctrines of 'Social Imperialism' and 'National Efficiency', and it was the conflict between "collectivist" and "old-fashioned individualist" approaches to government that was to be the main line of cleavage in English politics between the end of the Boer War and the outbreak of the First World War. All the various groups that constituted the Social Imperialist movement in England began to be vocal and active after the Boer War fiasco, but the roots of collectivist agitation can be traced back to the 1880's and the growing opposition to Gladstonian individualism. The Boer War and its demonstration of the State's inefficiency only served to crystallise and clarify this unease; the war's mismanagement made particularly relevant the call for efficiency and a scientific approach to government. In a diary entry in 1894, before the South African disasters, Beatrice Webb had remarked that for her and Sidney 'individualism' and 'anarchy' were synonymous. 'Collectivism' was to be their great ideal and she summarised their Fabian Socialism as comprising essentially

collective ownership wherever practicable;  
collective regulation everywhere else;  
collective provision according to need for all  
the impotent and sufferers; and collective taxation  
in proportion to wealth, especially surplus wealth.

The stress in this litany lies, of course, on 'collective', on the individual's subordination to the needs of the community, or, as Beatrice Webb was to comment, in an admiring reference to Japan, on "the self-abnegation of all classes of the community in a common cause." Liberalism was incompatible because of its commitment to individualism, to freedom of

contract, and the supply and demand of the market-place. The State, on the contrary, the collectivists argued, had to intervene in the lives of individuals. Backed by the facts gleaned from scientific investigation, it had to legislate for the improvement of material conditions.

It was against just this growing collectivist spirit that Ford's novels between 1901 and 1915 were, above all, directed. He was to champion the traditional values of the Conservative Party, "individualism and property as against collectivism and labour legislation", but Salisbury and Balfour, the repositories of these values, were being thrust aside by the collectivist Chamberlain. Chamberlain had been primarily responsible for the Government's declaration of war in 1899 and The Inheritors opposes both of the politician's main platforms—Imperialism and social reforms. Although the Boer War provided the novel's most obvious target, its deeper concerns lay with Ford's unease over the increasing collectivism of English life, the State's growing power over the individual. Ford, then, during the period between The Inheritors and The Good Soldier was, as he often called himself, a "Tory revolutionary". He was a Conservative by virtue of his adherence to the ideals of Salisbury and Balfour, the primacy of a landed aristocracy and an Established Church, with a rule based on 'tradition'; he opposed any "levelling" tendencies in politics, as represented by Chamberlain and the Fabians. Equally, though, he was a "revolutionary" Conservative because he attacked the party's Imperialism, arguing that South Africa ought rightfully to be ruled by its indigenous black population. (This was indeed a radical opposition to the doctrines of the Conservative Government; and even among the 'Pro-Boers', the Liberal opposition to the war, there was nobody in 1901 who was prepared to support the blacks' right to rule.) In general, however, Ford's brand of Conservatism was being superseded by Chamberlain's collectivist doctrines, and as the decade went by and Balfour's influence waned so Ford was to become

increasingly disenchanted with official Conservative policy. Ford, then, championed a set of values that grew less and less viable in English political life. His problem as a novelist in these years was, in a sense, akin to the difficulties Balfour faced as a politician. It was comparatively easy to employ his fiction as a means of attacking collectivism and what he perceived as the State's infringement of individual liberty. It was much less easy, Ford and Balfour found, to advance ideals that would have any contemporary purchase and not appear merely anachronistic.

The Inheritors can be considered, both in the strength of its patent social concern and in the weakness of its resolution, as typical of Ford's work in this early phase of his career. Begun in 1899, during one of the frequent intermissions in their work on Romance, it was published in 1901 as the first fruit of the Ford-Conrad collaboration. However, whereas the writing of Romance had been quite evenly divided between the two collaborators, The Inheritors is largely Ford's work, with Conrad only contributing about twenty pages at the end of the novel and, in Ford's phrase, giving the indefinitenesses of other scenes "a final tap" of solidity. 43

The novel's first word is "ideas" and it certainly is more directly engaged with people and ideas than the cloudy Romance. Indeed it was designed, as Ford later described it, as a roman à clef:

The novel was to be a political work, rather allegorically backing Mr Balfour in the Government; the villain was to be Joseph Chamberlain who had made the Boer war. The sub-villain was to be Leopold II, King of the Belgians.

These three figures all appear, thinly disguised, in The Inheritors and around them is constructed the political theme of the novel, embodying a conflict in society between the old guard, individualistic and libertarian (Balfour, under the somewhat confusing guise of 'Churchill') and the new,

collectivist, demagogic and ruthless (Chamberlain, alias 'Carnard'):

it showed the superseding of previous generations and  
 codes by the merciless young who are always alien and  
 without remorse.

(Ford, it might be noted, was 27 when The Inheritors appeared: the novel's conflict is ideological rather than generational.) Thus his first novel aspired to chronicle the young Ford's own time, with the political satire as a peg on which to hang more general criticisms of England at the turn of the century. The Inheritors' theme is the loss of traditional ideals in political and cultural life, but the Boer War alone hadn't destroyed these ideals; they had been under considerable strain for many years. The 1880's were perhaps "the last era of generally shared confidence in the natural directive capacities of the inherited political system." The old political dispensation, founded on the efficacy of 'tradition' as a ruling social idea and the system's ability to reconcile competing interests by rational, consensual means, had been fractured as early as 1886, fifteen years before The Inheritors, when, on one side, the Liberal Party of Gladstone had split over Home Rule, and, on the other, Randolph Churchill had launched his 'Tory Democratic' programme against Salisbury and the Conservative establishment. Tennyson, who published "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" in this same year, 1886, had expressed a sense that an era of peace and optimism had now closed forever. And so in responding to political change The Inheritors was in fact a comparatively late symptom of developments that had long been in train.

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In summary The Inheritors described how Arthur Granger, an aristocratic and unsuccessful novelist who, like Moffat in The Benefactor, prides himself on his high ideals, betrays these for the sake of a girl who doesn't return his love. (Unrequited love is a central preoccupation of the early Ford, the theme reaching its full development with The Good Soldier in 1915.) Granger first meets the girl from the Fourth Dimension in Canterbury Cathedral and learns that her people are to invade and inherit our three-dimensional earth, taking over power because of their lack of ethical scruples. They are "cold...clear sighted and admirably courageous, and indubitably enemies of society."<sup>46</sup> Ford's targets here are the leading figures of the Social Imperialist movement—Chamberlain in particular, Rosebery, Beatrice Webb and Milner—for "the most unmistakable and common characteristic of the insurgents was their aggressive, even predatory, self-assurance."<sup>47</sup> It is the arrogant self-righteousness of the collectivists that comes across most strongly in The Inheritors. "The old order", personified by Granger—or, more exactly, by his image of himself as a man of altruism and high principles—and by Churchill, the Foreign Secretary, "changeth" and will be succeeded by the eponymous Fourth-Dimensionists, in alliance with renegade terrestrial politicians such as Gurnard. Their first objective is to ruin Churchill and they plan to make use of Gurnard because of his aristocratic pedigree. The Duc de Marash (Leopold) has entangled the Government in a nefarious imperialist scheme for civilizing Greenland's Eskimos, for "letting the light in upon a dark spot of the earth", in a phrase that echoes the contemporaneous Heart of Darkness. Granger, too, is implicated in the fraud for having "puffed" Marash, though he secretly despises him.<sup>48</sup>



Granger has fallen in love with the girl despite knowing that she is conspiring against Churchill, whom he admires for his probity and adherence to the earlier traditions of public life. He could easily have denounced the girl, thus saving Churchill, but instead places his love above political and literary ideals. In fact, ironically, it is the unprincipled Callan, a novelist Granger despises, who exposes Mersch's scheme, discrediting Churchill for having supported it. In this way "all the traditional ideals of honour, glory, conscience", personified by Churchill, are proved to have been "committed to the upholding of a gigantic and atrocious fraud."<sup>43</sup> Granger failed to save the "old order" because of his obsession for the girl, yet at the end of the novel he is disappointed that his betrayals are unrewarded: the girl marries Gurnard, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The couple now embody the "new order" and Granger pessimistically envisages the future as

an immense machine—unconcerned, soulless, but all its parts made up of bodies of men: a great mill grinding<sup>50</sup> out the dust of centuries; a great wine-press.

Ford's nightmare vision of the future where the State has become a huge mechanism that swallows individuals is strikingly similar to Lord Rosebery's definition of 'national efficiency' in March 1902, a few months after the publication of The Inheritors:

a condition of national fitness equal to the demands of our Empire—administrative, parliamentary, commercial, educational, physical, moral, naval, and military fitness—so that we should make the best of our admirable raw material.<sup>59</sup>

For Rosebery and the 'National Efficiency' movements, individuals were merely the State's "raw material". Their 'mechanistic' view of society is opposed in The Inheritors by the traditional 'organicism' of the Conservative Party,



with its theory of a 'natural' state of society that would be destroyed by the intervention of a bureaucratic government. Shadows of a fearful apocalypse fall darkly over The Inheritors, as over Wells' early fiction and Masterman's Condition of England (1909). There is, however, a disturbing disjunction between Ford's rather rhetorical, melodramatic account of the future—the great "wine-press"—and the oddly dull dystopia that emerges from the novel's characters and episodes.

Nevertheless The Inheritors plainly aspired to be a serious political novel, a major part of its aim being indeed to render "the whole uneasy and shifting mood of Imperialism in its later phase."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, we know from other evidence that Ford was unhesitant in his condemnation of such imperialist activities as the Belgian exploitation of the Congo and the Boer War. <sup>23</sup> The Inheritors certainly does exemplify through de Mersch and his Greenland venture one strain of Ford's political thinking at the turn of the century, his abomination of colonial atrocities. It's also true that Ford's ominous title suggests that he had perceived that "a weakening tradition of rule diverted to Imperialism will be destroyed by the same methods that it has used to subjugate others"; that, in other words, the "old order" of the novel, the Conservative establishment, contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction by virtue of its exploitative involvements overseas. Salisbury had indeed adopted an Imperialist position as early as 1886, but, in Shannon's words, "Imperialism was...synthetic and artificial; it was an effort to create form in a formless world."<sup>24</sup> The Inheritors implies that the Conservatives' inability to resist the collectivist pressures of Chamberlain is linked with the party's complicity in "synthetic" late-Victorian Imperialism. There were in fact two main varieties of Social Imperialism: one, represented by the Webbs, stressing social reform; the other, which included Milner and Mackinder, emphasizing the need to strengthen the Empire. However, the full Social Imperialist creed, which The Inheritors attacked,

assumed the interdependence of imperialism and social reform. The Conservative Party was, then, ill equipped to counter the imperialism of Chamberlain and the 'Lamps'; the unanimity of the party's support for the Boer War was, to Ford, only evidence of its weakness as a buffer against social reform. Other analyses of Imperialism at the beginning of the century—by Hobson, Lenin and Luxemburg—were to stress its moral vulnerability and economic weakness. Ford, however, seems to have attacked it primarily because it had the effect of weakening the British Conservative Party. The novel's anti-imperialism was secondary to its attack on collectivism. Chamberlain, not King Leopold, was the real villain of the novel. The Inheritors might have been improved had Ford followed the example of Heart of Darkness and given more weight to Leopold's amorality.

Ford himself was later to call The Inheritors "a thin collaboration with no plot in particular", "tremendously sentimental", immature and adolescent, and although he wasn't always the most reliable judge of his own fiction, these remarks do appear remarkably apt. Still undefined, however, is the precise nature of the novel's limitations. Certainly the argument frequently advanced that The Inheritors is marred by its "style", its impressionistic telescoping of events, is well-founded. It's inadequate, though, since this only serves to indicate the symptoms of the problem and fails to reach the deeper causes of the novel's weakness. The fundamental cause may, rather, be located in the nature of the ideals which The Inheritors was intended to support, and the place of those ideals in political and cultural life at the turn of the century. These may have led Ford to choose a hero and a narrative form that were incapable of mounting an effective attack on Social Imperialist forces.

Ominously The Inheritors' opening episode takes place in Canterbury, close to those southern ports Ford had described in 1900. In that book, The Cinque Ports, they had symbolised the hallowed traditions of the past, towns that had quaintly survived into the twentieth century, preserved in their own memories but isolated economically from the bustling life of the metropolis to the north. The political attitudes behind The Inheritors are damagingly similar, fatally divorced from the present and from Joseph Chamberlain, "representative of a new bourgeois briskness, efficiency and hard-headed, business-like treatment of governmental problems."

Churchill, the model politician and Gurnard's antagonist, is, by contrast, described by Granger at one point as a "forgotten mediaeval city", like Rye or Hythe in The Cinque Ports. The protagonists are simply mismatched, with Gurnard so much more vital than the effete, ineffective Churchill. Furthermore, Granger himself, the novel's narrator and central figure, has, like the Victorian artists described in Ford Madox Brown, Rossetti and The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, an "intense contempt for the political mind", despising politics because he preferred "to take the world at its face value." This is a feeble attempt to rationalise his own passivity, since he could easily have prevented Churchill's exposure, just as the Kemp of Romance could twice have killed his enemies. Thus through the inglorious career of Granger—who is Christ-like in his ideals, yet acts like Iacariot—The Inheritors proposes that any connections the writer has with the public world of finance and politics are inevitably damaging, and that he would more honourably be employed as a hermit. This implies, then, that the world of the artist's imagination is somehow more real than the existence he spurns, but which must provide him with the raw material of his art. All of which accords ill with Ford's dislike of the Social Imperialists

and his desire to write a political novel. The willed isolation of the novel's hero and of its narrator is in stark contrast with, say, the policy of 'permeation' conducted by the Webbs, their robust decision to work alongside even those politicians, such as Lord Rosebery, for whom they had scant personal affection or intellectual affinity.

Thus despite its understanding of the self-righteousness and ruthlessness of the new collectivist forces, its perception of Social Imperialism's "undertones of authoritarianism and intolerance", The Inheritors is not, finally, a successful novel. Sceptical, like Balfour, of the efficacy of political action in countering the new militancy, Ford's ideals seem impotent by the side of Chamberlain's ruthlessness. The novel's insubstantiality was paralleled by the difficulties Balfour experienced in meeting Chamberlain's challenge. In part these were temperamental: the cultivated elusiveness that attracted Beatrice Webb was unlikely to halt a determined opponent. More importantly, though, Balfour and Chamberlain—Churchill and Gurnard in the novel—were playing by different rules. Chamberlain had no innate loyalty to the Conservative Party,

he could know or share nothing of emotional loyalty to the party of the Church and of the traditional ruling order. It was the best means at hand towards the end of national reconstruction.

Thus Balfour, though remaining as the Party's nominal leader, was powerless to prevent Chamberlain from effectively taking control in 1903. An aristocratic fastidiousness was insufficient. Ford's stance in The Inheritors was similar, as it was later in England and the English and The Benefactor. No action could usefully be taken that would prevent the exploitation of the Eskimos or forestall the Fourth Dimensionists' coup.

Moreover, Ford's employment of an explicitly apolitical artist as the novel's narrator had a deleterious effect on the narrative's credibility. The Inheritors is over-compressed, too impressionistic and shadowy, at precisely those points where the author's attack on collectivism really demanded the specificity of Nostromo. A political novel must be articulate about the mechanics of fraud and jobbery. But Ford chose as his narrator the last person who could enlighten us, a man who believed with Ford Madox Brown, that the artist-cobbler "should stick to his last." <sup>63</sup> Thus the necessity to substantiate the political world in a novel with such ambitions was compromised by Ford's delicate aversion from public life and his flight into nostalgia as a counterbalance to the "socialism of the Right, of order, social hierarchy, and bureaucratic control." <sup>64</sup>

A similar point was established by the contemporary reviewer who noted in The Inheritors that "the political and financial fraud with which so much destruction is wrought is too small and insignificant to be commensurate with the disastrous results demanded by the 'supersaders'". <sup>45</sup> This comment is apposite, since, to have functioned effectively in the novel, the Greenland scheme should have been established with the same centrality and resonance as the "silver" of Nostromo or the "ivory" of Heart of Darkness. However, as the novel develops, it becomes increasingly plain that Ford was less interested in the public effects of Granger's treachery than in the psychology of the traitor. Thus at the end of the novel we learn how Granger returned to his life as an outcast, but the only description of the new order established by the invaders is in metaphorical form—the "machines....will....[and] wine-press." This formulation is inadequate because: the momentum of the early chapters requires that we know and feel what the Dimensionists have gone to such pains to create. In Parade's End this metaphor of an immense machine will be embodied specifically and credibly in the war-machine of Flinders and will be clearly mediated through Tietjens' experiences. Ford's refusal



to specify the "new order" of The Inheritors tempts us to suspect that the defeat of the traditionalists is, finally, of no great import: Granger's own apathy, akin to Moffat's resignation in The Benefactor, fatally establishes itself as the prevailing mood of the novel's conclusion. It would appear, then, as if Ford shared Granger's belief in the possibility of a man simply washing his hands of treachery and returning to the sanctuary of 'private life'; the belief that freedom existed outside society. This stands at the furthest extreme from the Webbs' 'permeation' of the political fabric, their decision to embark on a policy of wholesale proselytism in order to convert their own "enemies", the "individualists" and "anarchists". The Inheritors, on the other hand, apparently endorsed Granger's view that freedom lay in the retreat from a hostile society, rather than in the struggle to change it. The literary shortcomings of the novel can scarcely be separated from the political failure of the ideals it espoused. As a novel The Inheritors is weakened by the absence of any kind of fervour or evangelicism; it's just too bland.

One final but related point should perhaps be made about the style of the novel. Ford elected to tell his tale in the form of a Wellsian fantasy, Churchill's career being threatened by a girl from the Fourth Dimension. <sup>66</sup> Clearly he had in mind The Time Machine (1895), in which time is the fourth dimension, yet there was really no need for Ford to adopt the mode of fantasy when the political point could have been made with equal force had the subversive girl been a Fabian. Mizener's observation, then, that the Wellsian framework entailed the sacrifice of verisimilitude to the allegorical implications sidesteps the interesting question of why Ford elected to use such a restricting narrative form for a novel intended as a roman à clef. <sup>67</sup> It is difficult to believe that it was ignorance of the Fabians that led Ford to avoid a realistic mode. More plausibly, perhaps, Ford's aristocratic aversion from the reformers, fully documented in England and the English, made him deeply unwilling



to delineate the men of the future with any clarity in The Inheritors. His withdrawal, in the England trilogy, from any polemics with those whom he feared would soon come to power—scathingly he called them the "theorists"—may help explain Ford's choice of extra-terrestrial invaders to represent the militant insurgency of Social Imperialism. He perhaps saw that a realistic presentation of this threat would have forced him to describe their motives and hopes with more exactitude than he could, at this stage, bring himself to bear. In this interpretation of The Inheritors the Wellsian fantasy was a handy camouflage for Ford's fear of coming too close to the conflict between individualism and collectivism. The ironical result of such a withdrawal was that Ford's commitment to individualism and the traditions of the Conservative past had to be expressed in a form that was schematic, futuristic and ill-equipped to deal with the nuances of personal choice. Science Fiction was a strange vehicle for the aristocratic ideals of landed property and the Established Church. The historical novel, to be employed in the "Fifth Queen" trilogy, offered a more promising form, giving Ford the opportunity for the analysis of character and the leisurely rendering of the past lacking in The Inheritors. And so, for reasons connected with the kind of escapist values it espoused, The Inheritors is flawed as a political novel, and Ford's undoubtedly sincere detestation of Imperialism and State interference is muffled. Character is flattened, action blurred, and the important implications of the conflict between Gurnard and Churchill are dispersed. Nevertheless, both of the collaborations between Ford and Conrad, The Inheritors and Romance, are interesting for the evidence they provide of how Ford's weakness as a novelist was, in fact, not solely the result of his private disabilities but was related to the radical changes that accompanied the destruction of the Victorian political consensus. Disraeli had imagined, soon after

Ford was born, that "popular confidence in the capacity and good will of the natural ruling class would suffice." Although it offers no effective substitute for such a credo The Inheritors helps us understand the strains placed on Salisbury's brand of Conservatism at the turn of the century.

Ford was an enormously prolific writer in the first decade of the century. The Inheritors stands alongside eight other full-length novels published between 1900 and 1909, as well as eight books of 'non-fiction' and several issues of The English Review. Novels, art criticism, a 'Condition of England' trilogy, a book of local history: he must have appeared indefatigable, but the very range and volume of his early work makes it difficult to hold in clear focus. The connecting thread was perhaps that all his work of this decade was a response to the collapse of the Victorian hegemony in both literature and politics. 'Victorianism' as a cultural concept had been alive in the early 1880's, but was dead by the late '90's. That faith in "the homogeneity of society and intellect, a synthesis of progressive politics and moral art", well exemplified in the grand design of Middlemarch, had collapsed:

the ascendancy of the old literary order  
crumbled in much the same way and for much  
the same reasons as the ascendancy of the old  
political order.

On the Continent, too, as Hughes has shown, the 1890's were a decade of intellectual revolution, the common denominator among the many innovations being their 'anti-positivism', their revulsion from ideology and abstract thought, from "the whole tendency to discuss human behaviour in terms of analogies drawn from natural science." The Inheritors, similarly, enunciated Ford's dislike of what he saw as the crude mechanism of the Social Imperialists, yet in its place he could only offer an effete traditionalism. The Social Imperialists, the movement Wells called "the revolt of the competent", had united their disparate forces from fear that otherwise social change would be effected by the revolutionary Left. They "saw themselves as the only

plausible alternative, combining modernity and stability and able to handle both social change and social order." <sup>72</sup> At this period Ford's 'modernity' was purely formal: his concern with technical radicalism and innovation. These, which had been developed in his 'workshop' with Conrad, were placed at the service of a social and political conservatism. To oppose the political modernists, the Webbs, Chamberlain, and Lloyd George, Ford offered only nostalgia.

The prevailing direction, then, of all Ford's work of this period was towards the past, towards the aristocratic Conservatism of Salisbury and Balfour which Chamberlain was engaged in destroying. By contrast, the forces in English political and cultural life that were working against the preservation of individualism and established traditions were characterised by their concern for the future. Like the Fourth Dimensionists of Ford's novel, all those agitating for 'national efficiency' appeared to possess very clear blueprints of the new order that would replace the existing muddle—what Wells in The New Machiavelli (1911) called the chaos of Bromsteadism. This London suburb in which Remington grew up epitomised for Wells the wastefulness of Victorian England. In its place Remington and his Social Imperialist colleagues soon after the Boer War

projected an ideal state, an organised state as confident and powerful as modern science, as balanced and beautiful as a body, as beneficent as sunshine, the organised state that should end muddle for ever; it ruled all our ideas and

73

gave form to all our ambitions.

All the various figures who constituted the Social Imperialist movement were indeed 'projectors', armed with their own vision of the new world. Beatrice Webb, for example, was the lone member of the Poor Law Commission (1905/1909) who had a clear sense of what she wanted to establish. The Tariff Reformers attempted "to create a Bismarckian England." 74 Sir William Ashley, the economist who supported them, saw the future as "great national organisations of working men." 75 Robert Blatchford, similarly, envisaged Britain

being developed along militarist, German lines:

The British nation must be like a regiment, it must be a living, breathing organism, with a collective mind and a collective soul. 76

Collectivists of all shades and of all parties had a robustness of action and energy of vision to which Ford could only respond with nostalgic passivity.

The consequence of Ford's lack of any coherent vision of the future is that his novels of this period have fractured, implausible endings. In The Inheritors Granger was left adrift and isolated. Similarly in An English Girl Don Kelleg, the hero, is pulled between an acknowledgement that social reform is urgent and the seductive attractions of a comfortable, propertied existence. His decision at the end to work for social justice is marred by Ford's inability to substantiate that choice with psychological and political credibility. Social reform in An English Girl is pallid and stunted because Ford lacked the imaginative ability to present it in compelling terms. The Benefactor, again, suffers from the absence of a coherent resolution. Its hero, Moffat, has sacrificed his own happiness and the desires of the woman he loves for the sake of the self-denying ordinances of his class. The novel is indeed a penetrating

analysis of the connections between class, money and sexual frigidity among the English middle-class, yet its whole momentum and Ford's sympathetic portrayal of Clara, the Meredithian heroine, demanded from Moffat some attempt at a radical reassessment of his sexual code.

The Benefactor fails in the end to provide this because Ford in 1905 appears to have been unable to imagine any alternative to a code that the novel has demonstrated to be inadequate. Romance, too, is characterised by enervation and passivity. Here, at the age of twenty-five, Ford had attempted with Conrad to write the story of a very old man looking back, with "the whisper of a nonagerian", on his distant, active youth. <sup>57</sup> "Looking back" is indeed the general direction of Ford's Edwardian fiction and it wasn't until the post-war Parade's End that Ford was able to create a fictional future that had any substance and coherence. Of all these early novels, of all the attempts to defend individualism against the decade's growing collectivism, the "Fifth Queen" trilogy is the most successful, perhaps because here the conventions of the historical novel permitted Ford the licence to use the past creatively. In this trilogy Ford was to find a way of embodying his values of tradition and individualism that carried conviction precisely because it was set in the past. Nostalgia was no longer the handicap that it had been in The Benefactor and The Inheritors. In the historical novel Ford was not required to project a vision of the future.



Ford's employment of The Inheritors at the beginning of the decade as a means of "allegorically backing Mr Balfour in the Government" had implied a measure of confidence in the Conservative Party's ability to counteract Chamberlain's pressures. <sup>78</sup> More generally, too, it suggested that Ford had some hope that the two-party system could still be made to function effectively. He would scarcely have backed Balfour or the Conservative Party had he felt in 1901 that the parliamentary system was already doomed. But Balfour lost effective control

in 1903 when the Chamberlain faction became the majority of the Unionist Party and so the very Party on which The Inheritors had earlier pinned its hopes was from 1903 to 1912 committed to a Social Imperialist programme. Disillusioned, Ford became a member of the Liberal Club in 1905, but when he left in 1908 he was effectively without party allegiance. Just as the Conservative Remington in The New Machiavelli discovered that no party was able to satisfy his ideals, so too did Ford, the traditional individualist, find himself out of sympathy with both major parties. When the Liberals came to power in 1906 with a 'Lamp' majority in the Cabinet, Social Imperialism had become the guiding programme of both parties. The "Fourth Dimensionists" had now, as it were, taken over the parliamentary system. Ford's earlier party allegiance gave place after 1908 to an explicit class allegiance. He would now support the 'classes' against the 'masses'. The keynote of Mr Apollo (1908) is a new apprehension, also exemplified in The Condition of England (1909), written by his friend Masterman, of the vast, unknown urban proletariat. Mr Apollo is a brittle, weak novel, yet it does reveal the fears that lay behind the establishment, in the same year, of The English Review.



Frustrated with orthodox party politics, Ford was increasingly afraid of the growing antagonism between the rulers and the ruled.

In the same year in Paris Gide and five other writers were founding the Nouvelle Revue Francaise, aimed at

a "classicism" of thought and expression—"a vindication of the conscious mind" through the exercise of "a rigorous critical vigilance."

Ford started The English Review with very similar convictions and ends, emphasising 'classicism' and rigorous standards, while being at the same time as hospitable as the Nouvelle Revue to formal experimentation. Both were organs of 'modernism'. The English Review, though, wasn't solely a literary magazine. It regularly carried political contributions of all shades and indeed the editor's explicit concern with politics once even jeopardised the injection of some badly-needed capital. Ford himself proclaimed the Review had no party-bias, being uncommitted to either the Liberal Government or the Conservative Opposition, and this claim was, as we have noted, undoubtedly sincere. Still, its editorial assumptions did have a very real ideological bias, which in practice aligned the Review with the 'elites', with the status quo, and against the 'masses', against reform. Ford's celebrated "Critical Attitude" towards literature is in fact closely entwined with his political attitudes, although earlier criticism has tended to view the "Critical Attitude" as an aesthetic code alone. The situation, as Ford saw it, was that public life was a whirlpool of opposing and contradictory theories whose only effect was to exacerbate the hostility between class and class. Hostile to any comprehensive, systematic analysis of social problems, such as the Webbs' Fabianism, and sceptical of the left-wing radicalism of his friend Cunninghame Graham, Ford wanted to take the heat out of public life and replace it with an attitude of aloof, classical rationalism,

above party and ideology. He felt that the Edwardian middle-class, whether Liberal or Conservative, was threatened by a class-war, and in such circumstances Ford saw his Review as a safety-valve. An Augustan distrust of 'enthusiasm' in either literature or politics, which he shared with Balfour, led Ford to call for a spirit of calm realism both in criticism and in public debate. Hence to ignore the political dimension of Ford's calmness abstracts the 'Critical Attitude' from the political changes in late-Edwardian England. Ford's English Review was indeed as responsive to public life and major issues as Leavis' Scrutiny (1932/1953) or Eliot's Criterion (1922/1939).

And so, as we read Ford's work of this decade, we don't sense that we are in the company of a man uninterested in the world, though we may be surprised by what appear to be paradoxes or instances of short-sightedness. In this respect, however, Ford was only conforming to the larger inconsistencies of Edwardian literature. Many of his dilemmas were not personal, but were rather the common property of the intelligentsia of his class and time. Ford was indeed, as a recent reviewer has suggested, "an interesting case of an Edwardian Man of Letters."<sup>82</sup> Thus despite his awareness of the various forces making for change—the Boer War; the collectivist movements; urban poverty; the excitement of working-class culture which Lawrence enabled him to glimpse and which brought home to him the disabling philistinism of the middle-classes—despite all these insights, perceptive but local, Ford remained wedded to the ideals of conservation and preservation.<sup>83</sup> Fascinating in this respect and marvellously revealing of the period is Ford's retrospective account in Lighter Than the Sword (1936) of his first meeting with the young Lawrence, whom he claims to have first mistaken for a fox. Ford was very clear about the strengths of "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and about

above party and ideology. He felt that the Edwardian middle-class, whether Liberal or Conservative, was threatened by a class-war, and in such circumstances Ford saw his Review as a safety-valve. An Augustan distrust of 'enthusiasm' in either literature or politics, which he shared with Balfour, led Ford to call for a spirit of calm realism both in criticism and in public debate. Hence to ignore the political dimension of Ford's calmness abstracts the 'Critical Attitude' from the political changes in late-Edwardian England. Ford's English Review was indeed as responsive to public life and major issues as Leavis' Sentences (1932/1953) or Eliot's Criterion (1922/1939).

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Lawrence's revolution in opening up a quite new territory for literary exploration, the world of the industrial working-classes, about whom, Ford aptly remarked, the English middle-class in 1909 knew less than about "Central Africa and its tribes." <sup>84</sup> Nevertheless Ford's receptivity to Lawrence's innovations is accompanied by a confession that he found his first visit acutely disturbing, since, though priding himself on his theoretical egalitarianism, a legacy from his maternal grandfather, he still felt himself one of the governing class despite his comparative poverty and half-German origins. As a consequence, he didn't quite know how to deal with a proletarian artist, with D.H. Lawrence. <sup>85</sup> This encounter brings to the surface the main tensions in the Edwardian Ford: the co-existence of a modern literary sensibility, acutely responsive to the significance of new work, with a social code that was regressive and blinkered.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

- 1 The main source for Ford's life is Arthur Mizener, The Saddest Story, A Biography of Ford Madox Ford (New York, 1971).
- 2 AL, pp. 106/7, cited in Mizener, p. 6.
- 3 Mizener, p. 16.
- 4 Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties (1922), ch. vi.
- 5 MPS, p. 94.
- 6 WJMA, p. 133.
- 7 Cassell, p. 117; Mizener, p. 18.
- 8 Mizener, p. 18.
- 9 Letter from Conrad to Ford of November 1898, cited in Mizener, p. 18.
- 10 MPS, p. 248.
- 11 Mizener, p. 37.
- 12 Mizener, p. 44.
- 13 "Preface" to The Migger of the "Narcissus", reprinted in M.D. Zabel, ed., The Portable Conrad (New York, 1968), p. 707.
- 14 Ibid., p. 706.
- 15 H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890/1930 (New York, 1958), p. 37.
- 16 Zabel, op. cit., p. 707 (italics added).
- 17 Hughes, op. cit., p. 66.
- 18 Zabel, op. cit., p. 708.
- 19 "Editor's Introduction", Zabel, op. cit., p. 8.
- 20 HJ, p. 45.
- 21 MTV, p. 84.
- 22 Hugh Kenner, "Conrad and Ford," Shenandoah, III (Summer 1952), 50/55, cited in Harvey, pp. 449/50.
- 23 Frederick R. Karl, "Conrad, Ford and the Novel," Midway, X,ii (Autumn 1969), 23.
- 24 I have referred in particular to: Pat M. Esslinger, "A Theory and Three Experiments: The Failure of the Conrad-Ford Collaboration," Western Humanities Review, XXII, ii (Spring 1972), 59/67; L.K. Hay, "Joseph Conrad and Impressionism," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXXIV, ii (Winter 1975), 137/44; Samuel Hynes, "Conrad and Ford: Two Rye Revolutionists," Harvard Occasions: Essays on English Writing in the Early Twentieth Century (1972), pp. 48/53; Karl, op. cit.; Hugh Kenner, op. cit., and "Remember That I Have Remembered," Hudson Review, III (Winter 1951), 602/11.
- 25 Zabel, op. cit., p. 705 (italics added).
- 26 Ibid., p. 706.
- 27 Kenner offers a serviceable summary in "Remember That I Have Remembered".
- 28 Zabel, op. cit., p. 705.
- 29 Zabel, op. cit., p. 706.
- 30 On Conrad's developing views of 'Impressionism' see Hay, op. cit.
- 31 JG, p. 61.
- 32 MOL, pp. 767/71.

- 33 Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership (1948), p. 222.
- 34 Robert J. Scally, The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition  
(New Jersey, 1975), p. 22.
- 35 Webb, op. cit., p. 84.
- 36 Ibid., p. 107.
- 37 Ibid., p. 299.
- 38 The definition again is Webb's: ibid., p. 117.
- 39 IB, pp. 400, 401.
- 40 SP, p. 20. Cp. "the levelling tendency of the unpleasant times  
we live in" elaborated at length in CP.
- 41 SP, p. 20.
- 42 Webb, op. cit., p. 192.
- 43 JG, pp. 117, 136; Arthur Mizener, The Saddest Story—A Biography  
of Ford Madox Ford (New York, 1971), p. 51; Charles G. Hoffmann,  
Ford Madox Ford (New York, 1967), p. 21.
- 44 JG, pp. 133, 134.
- 45 Richard Shannon, The Crisis of Imperialism, 1865/1915 (1974), p. 142.
- 46 IMH, p. 123. Conrad's visit to Dr MacIntyre, a pioneer  
radiologist, in 1898 gave rise to speculations about co-existing  
universes which Conrad and Ford probably discussed in preparation  
for this novel: C.T. Watts, "Joseph Conrad, Dr MacIntyre and  
The Inheritors," Notes and Queries, XIV (July 1967), 245/7.
- 47 Scally, op. cit., p. 16.
- 48 IMH, p. 32. For the relationship between IMH and Heart of Darkness,  
see M.M. Mahood, "Conrad and the Duke of Brabant," a paper  
delivered to the Second International Conference of Conrad  
Scholars, London, September 1972. I am grateful to Professor  
Mahood for loaning me a copy of her paper.
- 49 IMH, p. 185.
- 50 Ibid., p. 206.
- 51 Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform—English Social-  
Imperial Thought, 1895/1914 (1960), p. 63 (italics added).
- 52 P.L. Wilay, Novelist of Three Worlds—Ford Madox Ford (Syracuse, 1962),  
p. 140.
- 53 In CP Ford made the excellent point that every English voter must be  
held indirectly responsible for the murder and mutilation of the  
Congolese, because of his political apathy. Ford knew Roger  
Casement and had seen some of his photographs of the Congo  
atrocities: SP, pp. 142/3; Mizener, p. 535, n. 1, n. 12.
- 54 Shannon, op. cit., p. 251.
- 55 Semmel, op. cit., ch. xiii.
- 56 JG, pp. 53, 118, 141.
- 57 A much more credible picture of Rye's past is offered by the  
impressive opening chapters of IMH, where the racial, religious  
and economic pressures obtaining in the town in 1609 are  
delineated with great precision and economy. The remainder of  
the novel tails off.
- 58 Shannon, op. cit., p. 315.
- 59 IMH, p. 164. Cp. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City  
(1973), pp. 9, 36/7 and passim.
- 60 IMH, pp. 68, 41.
- 61 Scally, op. cit., p. 9.
- 62 Shannon, op. cit., p. 298.
- 63 AL, p. 147.
- 64 Scally, op. cit., p. 4.



- 33 Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership (1948), p. 222.
- 34 Robert J. Scally, The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition (New Jersey, 1975), p. 22.
- 35 Webb, op. cit., p. 84.
- 36 Ibid., p. 107.
- 37 Ibid., p. 299.
- 38 The definition again is Webb's: ibid., p. 117.
- 39 EWB, pp. 400, 401.
- 40 SP, p. 20. Cp. "the levelling tendency of the unpleasant times we live in" elaborated at length in CP.
- 41 SP, p. 20.
- 42 Webb, op. cit., p. 192.
- 43 JG, pp. 117, 136; Arthur Mizener, The Reddest Story—A Biography of Ford Madox Ford (New York, 1971), p. 51; Charles G. Hoffmann, Ford Madox Ford (New York, 1967), p. 21.
- 44 JG, pp. 133, 134.
- 45 Richard Shannon, The Crisis of Imperialism, 1865/1915 (1974), p. 142.
- 46 INH, p. 123. Conrad's visit to Dr MacIntyre, a pioneer radiologist, in 1898 gave rise to speculations about co-existing universes which Conrad and Ford probably discussed in preparation for this novel: C.T. Watts, "Joseph Conrad, Dr MacIntyre and The Inheritors," Notes and Queries, XIV (July 1967), 245/7.
- 47 Scally, op. cit., p. 16.
- 48 INH, p. 32. For the relationship between INH and Heart of Darkness, see M.M. Mahood, "Conrad and the Duke of Brabant," a paper delivered to the Second International Conference of Conrad Scholars, London, September 1972. I am grateful to Professor Mahood for loaning me a copy of her paper.
- 49 INH, p. 185.
- 50 Ibid., p. 206.
- 51 Bernard Gemmel, Imperialism and Social Reform—English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895/1914 (1960), p. 63 (*italics added*).
- 52 P.L. Wiley, Novelist of Three Worlds—Ford Madox Ford (Syracuse, 1962), p. 140.
- 53 In SP Ford made the excellent point that every English voter must be held indirectly responsible for the murder and mutilation of the Congolese, because of his political apathy. Ford knew Roger Casement and had seen some of his photographs of the Congo atrocities: SP, pp. 142/3; Mizener, p. 535, n. 1, n. 12.
- 54 Shannon, op. cit., p. 251.
- 55 Gemmel, op. cit., ch. xiii.
- 56 JG, pp. 53, 118, 141.
- 57 A much more credible picture of Rye's pact is offered by the impressive opening chapters of HM, where the racial, religious and economic pressures obtaining in the town in 1609 are delineated with great precision and economy. The remainder of the novel tails off.
- 58 Shannon, op. cit., p. 315.
- 59 INH, p. 164. Cp. Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (1973), pp. 9, 36/7 and *passim*.
- 60 INH, pp. 68, 41.
- 61 Scally, op. cit., p. 9.
- 62 Shannon, op. cit., p. 298.
- 63 AL, p. 147.
- 64 Scally, op. cit., p. 4.



- 65 Independent, LIII (October 31, 1901), 2597, cited in Harvey, p. 281.
- 66 Bergson's Time and Free Will and his concept of a fourth dimension were influential on the novel: Todd E. Bender, "Fictional Time and the Problem of Free Will," Wisconsin Studies in Literature, v (1968), 12/22.
- 67 Misener, pp. 494/6.
- 68 Thannon, op. cit., p. 104.
- 69 Ibid., pp. 269/88.
- 70 Ibid., pp. 269, 276.
- 71 H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890/1930 (New York, 1958), p. 37.
- 72 Scally, op. cit., p. 12.
- 73 H.G. Wells, The New Machiavelli (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 112.
- 74 Kemmel, op. cit., p. 177.
- 75 Ibid., p. 215.
- 76 Ibid., p. 233.
- 77 JC, p. 27.
- 78 JC, p. 133.
- 79 Hughes, op. cit., pp. 358/9.
- 80 Misener, p. 188. On the relationship between ER and the artistic revolutions of the next decade, see William C. Wees, Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde (Manchester, 1972), p. 76.
- 81 Articles by Graham and Hobson from the left were offset by Arthur Marwood's definition of the "tory utopia" in which every employee would be rewarded with 2400 p.a. and a plot of land: ER, I, i (December 1908), 159; CTR, pp. 407/8.
- 82 Anon, "Ford As Others Saw Him," The Times Literary Supplement, 3662 (May 5, 1972), 519.
- 83 RTY, p. 80 has a comment on London's poor. On Ford and Lawrence, see ibid., pp. 373 et seq., and John Beer, "Ford's Impressions of the Lawrence," The Times Literary Supplement, 3662 (May 5, 1972), 520: "the general impression which is given /in RTY/ of the breadth of thought and discussion in some English provincial areas during the years before the First World War." On the culture of Lawrence and Eastwood, see also: Donald Davie, "Dissent in the Present Century," The Times Literary Supplement, 3899 (December 3, 1976), 1519/20.
- 84 MWS, ch. v.
- 85 "I considered myself as belonging, by right of birth, to the governing classes of the literary and artistic worlds" (RTY, p.22). And, as RTY of the same period indicates, Ford held that it was this "literary and artistic" caste that was England's real rulers.

Chapter Three

"The Fifth Queen Trilogy"

-1-

More than seven years seem to intrude between Ford's completion of the Tudor trilogy in 1908 and the publication in 1915 of The Good Soldier, that modernist and unrelentingly demanding novel. The two works are products of two entirely different fictional 'poetics'. The trilogy is ample, leisurely, spacious, and so completely coherent at a first reading that later readings only serve to confirm what we already knew of its virtues. There is no 'instability' or 'turbulence' in the text of the Tudor novels; no gap between the page and the reader which the latter must fill "productively". The trilogy establishes "a single standard of voracity", excluding any elements that might be uncertain or problematic. It continues to maintain that "illusion of the single right reading" which The Good Soldier will shatter. The Tudor novels, like A Man of Property or Clayhanger, are to be read once and "consumed". They invite a reading that is passive and "consumptive", whereas The Good Soldier will force us to read in a fashion that is active and productive, based "on the evidence of conflicting and ambiguous clues". The Good Soldier is so compressed and frugal that it can only be read recursively. We have to go back to the text and

code ☐ it in accordance with later discoveries...The more self-reflexive ☐ the text, the more recursion is necessary, and the harder it is to code information unequivocally.

Any search for 'clues' or 'codes' in the trilogy would be futile. In the opening sentences the reader is invited to believe in the solidity of character and setting:

Registrar Nicholas Udal, the Lady Mary's  
pedagogue, was very hungry and very cold.  
He stood undecided in the mud of a lane in  
the Austin Friars. The quickset hedges on  
either side were only waist high and did  
not shelter him. The little houses all  
round him of white daub with grey corner  
beams had been part of the old friars'  
2  
stables and offices.

Udal may be hesitant here, but the reader knows immediately, from the self-assurance of these first few words, that no indecision is expected of him. We don't have to 'worry' over the text of the trilogy; all is open and above suspicion. These are, then, 'pre-modernist' novels, which affirm the vitality of a realistic tradition running back through what Ford called the Victorian "nurvle" to Defoe.

In the "Preface" to the 1913 edition of his poems Ford was to remark that the main business of the poet is to give a "faithful rendering of the received impression", and he praised Flint, Lawrence and Pound for having succeeded in reflecting the present as it appeared to them, in words that were neither imitative nor derivative.<sup>3</sup> In his collaboration with Conrad at the turn of the century Ford had proposed similar aims for the 'Impressionist' novelist, and in his final commentary on 'Impressionism' in fiction, in the late-'thirties, Ford was still emphasising the importance of a style that was "unnoticeable", self-effacing, "low-keyed" and "vernacular".<sup>4</sup> 'Impressionism', in both poetry and prose, was concerned with finding ways of escaping from a language that was formal and 'literary'.

Within the context of such theories, which he had attempted to practice in The Benefactor (1905) and was to return to in A Call (1910), the Fifth Queen novels seem markedly regressive. It was as if Ford had decided simply to by-pass the discoveries about fiction he had made with Conrad a decade earlier and to take up earlier models—Dickens, Thackeray, and, above all, Scott. The Tudor novels don't present "received impression<sup>7</sup>", with all their incoherencies and contradictions. Instead they are novels of scenes, panoramas and tableaux that are presented by an authoritative, omniscient novelist. Their style, too, is far from the self-effacement recommended by Ford and Conrad; it is indeed always consciously 'literary' and 'written':

Katharine's<sup>7</sup> knees felt suddenly limp and she clung to the latch for support; she believed that Mary had turned the heart of this villain. He repeated that he smelt treason working in the mind of an evil man, and that he would have her tell the Bishop of Winchester.<sup>5</sup>

The heroine's emotional crisis here is presented to us externally, as if we were spectators watching Katharine. We aren't given, from inside, the uncontrolled, unformed "impressions" that passed quickly through her mind. The language too—the limp knees; the clinging to the latch, the villain's heart and the smell of treason—is conventionally 'literary'. The formal demands of these novels are untaxing.

Ford and Conrad had intended that the 'Impressionist' novel should reflect in its style and language what they perceived as the formlessness of the contemporary world, England of the Boer War and its immediate aftermath. Ford's fictional theory committed him

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to rendering life dispassionately, to giving the effect of the formless and fragmentary nature of life as it meets the individual consciousness, and to directing the story to its inevitable conclusion.

His concern with language [was] designed to achieve these aims—the point of view, the time-shift, the progression d'affair, the selection and juxtaposition of events and impressions, and an objective, non-literary language....<sup>6</sup>

The 'Impressionist' novel would record disorder in a form that was in fact highly ordered, disciplined and self-aware. Ford evidently felt that his decision to set these three novels in the past, in Tudor England, freed him from the obligations that had to be met by the honest recorder of the contemporary world. He would describe the past in a way which would suggest that that age, in being comprehensible and lucid, was fundamentally different from the inchoate present. The Tudor trilogy implies, then, the pastness of the past, whereas Montross, for instance, had underlined its presentness. Ford never once invites us to believe that Henry VIII or Cromwell saw their world with the same unfocussed eyes as Dowell or as Granger in The Inheritors. Ford's view of the past is radically different from his apprehension of the present. Motivation and action are often complex in the Tudor novels, but they are presented as if they are comprehensible to the novelist. Ford's formal regression, the temporary abandonment of 'Impressionism', is thus closely connected with his thematic regression, the decision to place his novels in the sixteenth century.



Yet although the "Fifth Queen" trilogy is, in both its Tudor setting and in its traditional, pre-Conradian techniques, undoubtedly a 'dated' novel, it is far from being naive. On the contrary, it's the work of an intelligent, coherent novelist, ably controlling the large forces he has set in motion amidst the vast spaces of his Renaissance world. Ford makes full use of his commitment to the third-person narrative and to the actuality of time and space. The trilogy is full of passages of great descriptive power, which led Goldring to suggest the influence on Ford of his grandfather's large medieval pictures.<sup>7</sup>

Graham Greene remarked that the three novels were "lit as carefully as a stage production."<sup>8</sup> Always, though, such realistic descriptions, of buildings and clothes, are controlled by the whole design of the trilogy, in which the places occupied by Ford's dramatis personae are meticulously 'blocked'. Indeed Ford wrote a play based on The Fifth Queen Crowned and all the characters of the novels are presented as if they were on stage, their interrelationships delineated through dialogue and 'business'.<sup>9</sup>

The essentially visual, scenic appeal of the trilogy is also suggested by the novelist's reference to Holbein, on whom he had earlier published a critical study.<sup>10</sup>

The realism of the German painter served as Ford's model in the trilogy, but historical realism of any period isn't achieved simply by ornate descriptions. Ford's lengthy, detailed picture of the royal stables in The Fifth Queen could be paralleled in the later Lidian Whose Bright Eyes, but the latter's medieval scenes fail to convince us because we don't sense behind them any controlling intellectual framework.

Colour and brightness must be substantiated by the author's understanding of the social forces prevailing at the time, and the effect of these pressures on his characters' lives. It was to just this understanding that Ford was referring when he praised Holbein for his "realism".<sup>11</sup>

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Ford's extensive reading had informed him that Henry's stable-lads were a livery decorated with the roses of both York and Lancaster, and that the rushes for the thatch at Greenwich were cut from the banks of the nearby Thames. The real distinction, though, of the trilogy lies more deeply, in its successful rendering of the fundamental pressures in mid-sixteenth-century England. At that time the old feudal landowners were in conflict with a rising bourgeoisie, and this is the clash that underlies the whole of the trilogy. It was an age of transition between feudalism and early capitalism, and the "Fifth Queen" novels both reflect and, in their juxtaposition of contrasting scenes, are even moulded by this tension.<sup>12</sup> In terms of England's foreign policy, a key theme in the novels, the battle between dying feudalism and nascent capitalism was expressed in a permanent oscillation between pro- and anti-Spanish strategies.<sup>13</sup> (These sudden switches of policy were similar to the changes in the official English attitude to Germany in the years before 1914.) All the characters of the trilogy, even minor figures such as Udal, the lecherous classicist, are shown to be circumscribed by these forces. (Ford had remarked upon "the amount of subsidiary addition to the dramatic centre" of his grandfather's paintings, and it's similarly true of the Tudor novels that the central conflict ripples out to their circumference.)<sup>14</sup> At the opening of The Fifth Queen the Protestant faction is in the ascendancy because the King has committed himself to Anne of Cleves, and Cromwell's life depends upon the success of this alliance. Accordingly, the kiss that Henry bestows on Katharine Howard's temple in Part One is imbued with great political significance, since the abandonment of Cleves in favour of the Catholic Katharine would signify the defeat of the Protestant wing and a move towards a new, pro-Catholic alignment. The characters in Ford's novels are alert to every whim and nuance of the ruling class. His success in the trilogy lies in showing how the freedom of action of each of these characters is vitally affected by the central collision between the old

nobility and the rising bourgeoisie. Even the monarch must continually be playing off one group against the other. At the end he has as little control over his own life as Rostrono's Gould, for, as Katharine acutely observes, Henry is but a "weathercock" and nobody in his Court can escape the intrigue and plots hatched in "a world of men who did one thing in order that something very different might happen a long time afterwards."<sup>15</sup>

Ford's chosen technique may emphasise the pastness of this world, yet it's also able to unravel its internal complexities.

Action in the trilogy, then, is always rooted in social and economic foundations that Ford articulated with great coherence. He made his Tudor characters "live", as Walter Allen put it, because they are rendered with the same complexity as those in a novel set in the present, such as

<sup>16</sup>  
Parade's End. The externality of Ford's approach to character in the historical novels is a very different method from the internality through which Dowell and Tietjens are rendered, yet both approaches, if fully exploited, are capable of making the reader "see". Ford, using a 'pre-modern' method, has created credible people and has re-created the world of Tudor England, within whose tensions and conflicts their lives are passed. Reliance upon earlier models, Scott especially, doesn't lessen the trilogy's intellectual and aesthetic distinction. The trilogy demonstrates Ford's ability to root character "in milieu, and particularly in politics", and for the first time in his career he shows that he can marshal and analyse political forces, reveal the relationship between conflicting ideas and how these are embodied in completely credible

<sup>17</sup>  
characters. It was a success he was to repeat—with less tractable, modern materials and with a modernist method—in Parade's End and the trilogy's grasp of complex detail is distinctly superior to the vagueness with which the political world of The Inheritors had been drawn.

The Inheritors had been designed to support Balfour in the Conservative Party, and the Tudor novels have similar sympathies. Ford's fear of the collectivist forces in English politics—Chamberlain among the Conservatives, as well as the Fabians outside that Party—is once more the dominant pressure behind the Tudor novels. Furthermore, now that he was engaged on a series of historical novels, Ford's own particular view of English history came into play. These two factors—his attitude to contemporary politics and his larger scenario of historical development—played a considerable part in the construction of the "Fifth Queen" series.

In the last years of his life Ford began his Wellsian The March of Literature at a point two thousand years before Christianity, and he once<sup>18</sup> described himself as "a Tory mad about historic continuity."

This obsession with tradition and continuity lies behind the Tudor novels. It was indeed Ford's preoccupation with the idea that the England of his day had lost touch with its roots that led him to design a fictional history from the fourteenth century (Ladies Whose Bright Eyes) through the Tudor trilogy, the Stuart 'Half Moon', the eighteenth-century Portrait, the Napoleonic A Little Less Than Gods, and into the twentieth century with Parade's End. Thus the "Fifth Queen" trilogy is only one section of a large tapestry that, with varying degrees of success, attempts to express in fictional terms Ford's sense of the importance of history's legacy to the present. His aim, as he wrote in 1900, was to instil

a just appreciation for the lessons of tradition—  
a possibility of being able to mould the future  
with some eye to the institutions of the  
old times.<sup>19</sup>

Ford was never to lose this sense of the weight of the past and when he died he was at work on an unpublished "History of Our Own Times". The past was always "the lodestar of his career from its beginnings."<sup>20</sup>



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The lineaments of Ford's theory of English history, expressed with some paradoxes and confusions in this cycle of novels, are exemplified by his comment that western civilisation had failed to improve upon the Roman Empire, and that our banking system was indeed much inferior.<sup>21</sup>

In brief, Ford was a pessimist, who saw history as a decline from a distant glory and argued for a progressive decline from feudalism down to the present. Riddled with contradictions, Ford's "consciously contrived theory of historical and psychological evolution in the Western world" divided English history into four distinct "ages" which themselves grew and decayed within the larger, comprehensive pattern of general decline.<sup>22</sup>

The ingredients of Ford's theory, and of other views of history current at the turn of the century, were regressive Darwinism, elements of Hegel and Taine, and traces of ~~fin-de-siècle~~ gloom. Its central features were its rigid determinism and its scepticism towards the prospect of ameliorating the human condition.<sup>23</sup> When applied to the world of Chamberlain and Balfour, Ford's theory would place him alongside that section of the Conservative Party most hostile to reform.

These theories of Conservative pessimism would also affect Ford's rendering of Renaissance history. He was fond of dividing mankind into two groups—the idealistic and sentimental "Platonists" and the "Aristotelians", who were empirical, cynical and realistic.<sup>24</sup> Ford always prided himself on being an "Aristotelian", but the pattern of his thinking about both the past and the present actually incorporated a highly romantic, "Platonic" assumption: in historical terms, that feudalism was a near-perfect system, and, in modern terms, that the English gentry and upper-class had found the elixir of social life. Both these were, at least, questionable propositions and, as *The Spirit of the People* and *The Good Soldier* suggest, Ford had some difficulty in reconciling the actual data of English upper-class life with his idealised version of that world. Similarly his veneration of feudalism,

the keystone of his history, often runs counter to his deeper insights into the reality of the past, and, since the Tudor trilogy is Ford's fullest portrait of the feudal world, with Katharine intended to personify his vision of "feudalism", we cannot ignore the effects of Ford's theory on these novels. His view of the feudal world was akin to T.S. Eliot's "nostalgia for closed, immobile, hierarchical societies" and to T.E. Hulme's affection for Byzantine civilisation. <sup>25</sup> These poetic "worlds", and the analogous ones of Pound, Yeats and Lewis, authoritarian, rigid and highly formal, were built as bulwarks against the anarchistic forces they discerned in their own age. Similarly, Ford, like many writers of the previous century, turned back to feudal England as a repository of idealism and communalism. "Idealization of the Middle Ages...is... characteristic of nineteenth-century social criticism" and Ford drew on these sources when he argued that "the old feudalism and the old union of Christendom beneath a spiritual headship" couldn't be bettered as a social framework. <sup>26</sup> This version of feudalism had only tenuous connections with the historical phenomenon of the same name, its value for Ford residing less in its actual accuracy than in the private need it fulfilled in recreating a society in which order and ritual were central. <sup>27</sup> In an England in transition Ford, like Chesterton and Belloc, required the reassurance derived from a set of private myths. Ford's account of the world of Henry VIII and Cromwell was, then, moulded by his own mythology of history.

However, as well<sup>45</sup> being an expression of his own individual reading of English history, the Tudor trilogy was also designed to reflect upon the politics of Edwardian England. In thinking about the parallels between the two ages, Ford commented that his Henry VIII

represents the modern world being born out of the medieval. As a ruler at home he had to face almost exactly the social problems we are still facing, even to the relations of capital & labour & the question of agricultural depopulation. As a foreign politician he is one of the first & certainly one of the most  
28  
portentous of the type of Bismarck.

As Misener has remarked, "we are meant to see the life of our times  
29  
reflected in the life of Henry VIII's." Just as The Inheritors had been planned as a roman à clef so too was the Tudor trilogy intended to comment upon Edwardian politics. The earlier novel had suggested that Ford's deepest sympathies lay with the conservative forces of his age and that he was profoundly sceptical of the claims of reformists and collectivists. Furthermore, as a consequence of his fastidiousness, Ford felt that a man should retain his idealism in isolation from public life, as Granger did at the end of The Inheritors. In the latter, as in The Benefactor, Ford invited us to share his belief that freedom lay in the mere retention of a set of ideals, irrespective of their validity. He was thus preoccupied with the austere glory of martyrdom, renunciation and resignation. These were the bases of his response to the developments within the Conservative Party and to the increasing dominance of the "collectivists" within English political life.

Ford, though, sometimes failed to detect the arrogance and blindness of his victims' inability to respond actively to change. There is an element of this, of the self-regarding conceit of martyrdom, in the "Fifth Queen" trilogy, where Katharine is not only a martyr, like Grange, and Moffat in The Benefactor, but a feudal martyr as well. <sup>30</sup> Ford did certainly try to depoliticise Tudor religion, to make it appear as if the Queen's ambition to re-establish Catholicism in England could really be divorced from the political and economic realities of that age. Katharine herself is blind to the political implications of her aspiration and Ford seemed to condone her myopia in order, once more, to try to make failure admirable, more estimable indeed than success. He omitted to criticise Katharine Howard's egoism from a desire to highlight the conflict between idealism and reality, and to ennoble the former's inevitable defeats. The pattern of The Inheritors is being repeated in the Tudor novels. But Katharine cannot reinstate Catholicism by pretending that her enemies don't exist. Indeed it's arguable that the real heroes of the trilogy are in fact Cromwell and Throckmorton because of their awareness that freedom only lay in "the recognition of necessity". The latter, however, was too close to the Fabians' policy of permeation to have much attraction for Ford. He, on the contrary, admired Katharine's obsession with the purity of her feelings, the beauty of her own motives, and the stubbornness of her refusal to missever and lobby, because they appeared to constitute another illustration of the nobility of remoteness from public life.

These, then, were the twin pressures at work behind the Tudor novels—Ford's Guardian Conservatism and his pessimistic view of historical development in general. He had temporarily abandoned the tenets of 'Impressionism' in order to take up the traditional, realistic narrative of Scott. Yet this kind of 'cosmic', omniscient presentation was by no means devoid of political implication. Holbein, Ford's model, hadn't been a neutral, dispassionate painter of Renaissance England, and Ford's novels with the same setting were no less affected by their creator's presumptions and prejudices. Under these

pressures Ford made a number of modifications to the historical reality of the period. In particular he was forced to alter the characters of Katharine, his heroine, and of Thomas Cromwell, her major enemy.

Outside the trilogy Ford recognised in full Cromwell's historical importance. In The Spirit of the People Ford noted that he was the great man of the age, who "welded England into one formidable whole."<sup>31</sup> A few years later Ford was to comment that Cromwell "was the founder of modern England" and a "genius".<sup>32</sup> Yet in the Tudor novels the same man is portrayed as a sinister Machiavellian villain, first introduced in the cold and darkness of his barge:

The Lord Privy Seal was beneath a tall cresset in the stern of his barge, looking across the night and the winter river. They were rowing from Rochester to the palace at Greenwich, where the Court was awaiting Anne of Cleves. The flare of the King's barge a quarter of a mile ahead moved in a glowing patch of lights and their reflections, as though it were some portent creeping in a blaze across the sky. There was nothing else visible in the world but the darkness and a dusky tinge of red where a wave caught the flare of light further out.

He stood invisible behind the lights of his cabin; and the thud of oars, the valuable noises of the water, and the crackling of the cresset overhead had, too, the quality of impersonal and supernatural phenomena. His voice said harshly:

"It is very cold; bring me my greatest cloak."<sup>33</sup>

Cromwell's association here with the crackling torches and the "dusky tinge of red", an "impersonal and supernatural" occurrence, is slightly Satanic. In the kind of novel Ford is here writing darkness and cold are always loaded with ethical assumptions. A man of arctic blood and few words,



Cromwell is portrayed in Ford's fiction with near-total disfavour. There is no occasion in the trilogy when Ford attempts to evoke the reader's sympathy for the Privy Seal, and even his death, which might have drawn us towards him, is not described. In a work not notably squeamish about physical violence it's surely significant that Ford merely allowed Cromwell to disappear from view after Throckmorton's charges at the end of Privy Seal. Such lack of sympathy accorded well with Ford's need to idealise medievalism through Katharine, Cromwell's chief opponent, but it hardly squared with what Ford, the student of Tudor history, knew about the innovative features of Cromwell's rule.

Superficially at least, Ford appears to have succeeded in this attempt to devalue Cromwell's real stature, though there is one scene in Privy Seal the interview between Cromwell and Wriothesley, where the author briefly permits us to see what we may have suspected: that Cromwell was in fact no less disinterested or idealistic than Katharine herself. Cromwell, Ford wrote, paused and then, surprisingly, spoke "gently":

'And assuredly ye do me more wrong than ill,'  
he said. 'For this I swear to you, ye have heard  
evil enow of me to have believed some. But there  
is no man dare call me traitor in his heart of  
them that do know me. And this I tell you:  
I had rather die a thousand deaths than that ye  
should prep me up against the majesty and awe of  
government. By so doing ye might, at a hazard,  
save my life, but for certain ye would imperil  
that for which I have given my life.'<sup>34</sup>

And Cromwell concludes with words that, with but slight alteration, we might be tempted to attribute to Katharine:

'.....that before all creeds, and before all  
desires, and before all women, and before all men,  
standeth the good of this commonwealth, and state,  
and King, whose servant I be. Get you gone and

report my words ere I come terribly among ye.<sup>35</sup>

In its subordination of self to a larger ideal this speech anticipates some of Katharine's words before her death in The Fifth Queen Crowned. The stylistic affinities serve to remind us of the psychological kinship of the trilogy's two protagonists. Their ideals were indeed very different—Cromwell's fidelity being to the State, Katharine's to the primacy of the Church—yet each held to these ideals with a similar fortitude and consistency. Both, also, though fundamentally loyal to Henry, died as traitors. In this isolated scene, then, Ford presents Cromwell with some of the generosity accorded him in his non-fiction, but the rhythms of his speech to Wriothesley, with its passionate affirmation of political unselfishness, are quite untypical of the presentation of Cromwell elsewhere in the trilogy. Despite the fact that Cromwell was as dedicated a visionary as Katharine and despite the novelist's understanding of the man's political modernity, Ford does his best to vilify Cromwell, consistently associating him with only the most brutal aspects of Tudor life.

Alongside, and closely related to the novelist's denigration of the real Cromwell, lay Ford's idealisation of the real Katharine Howard. There is, it is true, nothing sacrosanct for the artist about the biographies of historical characters. The novelist's duty lies not in fidelity to minutiae—this is "the pseudo-historicism of the mere authenticity of individual facts"—but rather in preserving the broad outlines of the social forces obtaining in his chosen period.<sup>36</sup> He cannot, therefore, criticise Ford simply for having transformed a rather ordinary Tudor aristocrat into a Catholic martyr. Nor is there any basic improbability in Katharine's character in the novel, though the ending of The Fifth Queen Crowned, like the conclusions of his other Edwardian novels, does leave the impression of being too hurried.<sup>37</sup>

The real criticism to be made is that Ford has idealised Katharine's own idealism, failing to provide sufficient distance between himself and his

heroine. (This weakness can be located in all Ford's fiction of this period. It's surely present too in Galsworthy's Irene and Forster's Schlegel sisters.) In the case of Cromwell—as with the Wilcoxes and the young Soames in two other Edwardian novels—we are distanced from a character's aspirations by the novelist's creation of a large gap between Cromwell's ends and the means used to achieve them. With Katharine, however, her creator failed to bring to bear enough scepticism about her aspirations.

In summary, then, the changes Ford made to his real-life models are different, yet closely related to his overall historical purpose.

With Cromwell, Ford gave us a partial view in order to minimise the actual historical importance of those forces he stood for. Cromwell was a remote ancestor of those reformists and collectivists who were now working towards the intensification of State power in Edwardian England. With Katharine, he chose to magnify her idealism in order to glorify those regressive forces she personified. In both cases Ford, acting with the novelist's proper freedom, altered historical fact. More dangerously, he attempted to tilt the balance in the actual historical forces at work in Tudor England in order to manufacture material supporting his own belief in "feudalism" and in renunciation, "the seductive appeal of pretending that ideal virtue is humanly possible."<sup>38</sup>

There exists in Ford's trilogy a continuous tension between a centripetal system that the intellectual desires to impose on his world and the centrifugal energies of the world that, as a novelist, he has brought into being. Irving Howe has identified these two forces as the pressures of "ideology" and of "emotion", and has argued that in their inevitable clash

Abstraction....is confronted with the flux of experience, the monolith of program with the richness and diversity of motive, the purity of ideal with the contaminations of action.

39

This was surely what occurred in the trilogy, where the monolithic structure of Ford's view of history, imbued with conservative implications for the Edwardian present, pressured him to distort Katharine and Cromwell. Ford certainly sympathised with the former's vision of the chaste rectitude of escapism. To this extent Fleishman is right in detecting evidence that Ford intended to use the trilogy as a vehicle for his own escapism:

Ford's imagination is poised upon the dichotomy of historical corruption and civilized retirement, and his escapism avoids a personal tone by being expressed in the language and myths of the men of the past. By identifying his own escapism with that of the Renaissance, Ford achieved genuine historical sympathy with another world-weary age.

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But the essential point is that the mid-sixteenth century was not decadent, bored or 'ninety-ish. Indeed Ford's actual achievement in the trilogy lay precisely here: in his recreation of the basic energy and vitality of the period, despite his own private, 'ideological' leanings towards hypostasis.

towards an Horatian retirement from action.

Ford's "ideology" thus fell victim to his "emotion", to his deeper insights as an artist in tune with the period's conflicts. The Tudor trilogy depends for its strength upon the framework of actual history and not on the mythical pattern that Ford sought to impose. History was an invaluable discipline which finally prevented the trilogy from being a fictional enactment of Ford's own leanings.<sup>41</sup> Ford's accomplishment is to show, through the lives of a few individuals, a particular society in change, evolving inexorably from late-feudalism towards modern capitalism. He has presented us with a vision of "time as change" despite the attraction of the closed, hierarchical, static world of his "feudalism".<sup>42</sup> In the most concrete and realistic way the trilogy demonstrates that Katharine's aspirations are determined "by the form of organization of society, by the relation of forces within it", despite Ford's own interest in proving that these forces were most nobly ignored.<sup>43</sup> Although Ford himself may have disliked "the relation of forces" within both Tudor and Edwardian England, he still created three novels whose every episode and character in fact bore witness to the potency of those forces Katharine abhorred, the ambitious Protestant bourgeoisie determined to "put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations."<sup>44</sup> Superficially the trilogy is pessimistic, ending with the bare record of Katharine's death on Tower Hill on the eve of St Valentine's Day. More fundamental, however, is the vitality with which it renders the claims of historical progress and its truthfulness in portraying human behaviour, in which

Each phenomenon shows the polyphony of many components, the intertwinement of the individual and the social, of the physical and the psychical, of private interest and public affairs.<sup>45</sup>

The Tudor trilogy is a highly sensuous work, communicating through an appeal to sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:

A man with a conch-shaped horn upturned was suddenly blowing beneath the archway seven hollow and reverberating grunts of sound that drowned his voice. A clear answering whistle came from the water-gate. Cromwell stayed, listening attentively; another stood forward to blow four blasts, another six, another three. Each time the whistle answered. They were the great officers' signals for their barges that the men blew, and the whistle signified that these lay at readiness in the tideway. A bustle of men running, calling, and making pennons ready, began beyond the archway in the

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quadrangle.

Ford tells his tale through the management of texture, tone and colour, and his implicit assumption, so deep that it is not verbalised, is the existence of a harmony between man and nature. This is "romantic" art—in the sense that T.E. Hulme was shortly to employ—the product of an optimistic "liberal humanism" that upheld the possibility of human communication. As such it provided the perfect vehicle for Ford's commitment to the values of tradition and continuity. The sanctity of the individual consciousness, which Ford feared was being threatened by the new movements in English political life, was given in the trilogy its fullest expression.



Nevertheless Ford knew that his own world, the London of the 1900's, couldn't be rendered in the same leisurely, humanist way. The theories of the 'Impressionist' novel which he had developed with Conrad a decade earlier had indeed been posited upon the existence of a world that was stressful, hurried and uncertain: a world, in short, recognisably 'modern'. Ford's future lay here, in the refinement of a modernist medium capable of rendering his own world with the expressiveness of the traditional trilogy. Though brash and intolerant, Hulme's prognosis that the kind of art exemplified by The Fifth Queen was moribund certainly corresponded to the development in Ford's career. Through A Cell (1910), The New Humanity (1912) and Mr. Flight (1913), he was to approach The Good Soldier (1915), a novel that, with its pervasive nihilism, questions all the fundamental "romantic" assumptions of the Tudor tapestry, especially its "texture of actuality."<sup>47</sup>

When Conrad—like James, a skilled exponent of the backhanded compliment—commented, in a letter to Galsworthy that

Ford's last Fifth Queen novel is amazing. The whole cycle is a noble conception—the swan song of Historical Romance—and frankly I am glad to have heard it<sup>48</sup>

he was putting his finger on an important feature of the trilogy. Whether or not it marked the demise of a genre—and Conrad plainly hoped it did—the Tudor novels certainly constituted Ford's swan song. Never again was he to invest any serious energy in the 'Historical Romance': The 'Half Moon' (1909) was originally to have been part of another trilogy that was, significantly, never completed.<sup>49</sup> In the future the main direction of Ford's interests lay elsewhere, in the articulation, through The Good Soldier and Parade's End, of his own age. Nevertheless, although the Tudor novels can easily be dismissed as a diversion in Ford's career, a playful interruption to the stern business of 'Impressionism' and the search for formal exactitude, they did have some lasting value for Ford that Conrad was in no position to anticipate. There is no evidence that they presented any great technical problems to

Ford—there are no records of the agonised rewritings that marked the progress of Romance and The Inheritors—yet they did give him the opportunity to practise working on an extended canvas. The experience he gained here from the manipulation of large numbers of characters amidst complex political motivations must have stood him in good stead when he came to write Parade's End. The latter presented difficult formal problems, of the kind that the Tudor trilogy had evaded, but at least Ford was now aware of some of the demands that he would have to meet when he came to write about the politics of the contemporary world. Ford's apprenticeship, then, was now complete. He had experimented in both the small-scale, concentrated 'Impressionist' novel and in the larger, more expansive chronicle. He was now equipped to move towards The Good Soldier and Parade's End. Collaboration with Conrad and his own historical experiments provided the twin foundations for his later career.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

- 1 I am drawing here on Frank Kermode's valuable discussion of The Good Soldier in his "Novels: Recognition and Deception," Critical Inquiry, I (September 1974), 103/21.
- 2 Id. p. 11. All quotations from the trilogy are taken from The Bodley Head Ford Madox Ford, Vol. II (London, 1962).
- 3 COLLP, pp. 28, 24.
- 4 HOL, pp. 767/771.
- 5 Id. p. 147.
- 6 Cassell, p. 72.
- 7 Douglas Goldring, The Last Pre-Raphaelite: A Record of the Life and Writings of Ford Madox Ford (1949), p. 114.
- 8 "Introduction," The Bodley Head Ford Madox Ford (London, 1962), p. 10.
- 9 Harvey, p. 36.
- 10 Id. p. 157.
- 11 Ford wrote that Holbein was an artist "incomparable for his holding the mirror up to the men and women of his wonderful age", because he had grasped, and given artistic expression to, the underlying spirit of "renaissance Europe, the change from the feudal world of certitude to the modern age of scepticism and disillusionment" (HM, p. 56).
- 12 Isaac Deutscher has described it as an age when "the monarchy... was maintaining the uncertain equilibrium between a decaying feudalism and a rising capitalism": "The Roots of Bureaucracy," Marxism in Our Time (London, 1972), p. 191.
- 13 "The Howards normally led the pre-Spanish, catholic, conservative group, from the days when they successively overthrew Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell: they were overthrown themselves in 1547 to guarantee the protestant succession... on the other side, from Thomas Cromwell through the Dudleys to Oliver Cromwell, there were proponents of a more positive protestant foreign policy": Christopher Hill, Reformation to Industrial Revolution—A Social and Economic History of Britain, 1530/1780 (London, 1967), pp. 59/60.
- 14 Id., pp. 372/3.
- 15 Id. p. 186.
- 16 The English Novel (Harmondsworth, 1958), p. 328.
- 17 Arren Fleishman, The English Historical Novel, Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf (Baltimore, 1971), p. 210.
- 18 Id. p. 103.
- 19 Id. p. 270.
- 20 M.D. Zabel, Craft and Character in Modern Fiction (London, 1957), p. 254.
- 21 Id. p. 432.
- 22 Huntley, p. viii. An illustration of the incoherence of Ford's theories: a few pages after postulating the decline of post-Tudor England, he argues that the seventeenth-century in England was one of the world's great civilisations. Similarly he can attack the violence of the Boer war, while overlooking the widespread carnage of feudalism. Ford tried to rationalise his inconsistencies by contending that his system was not a statement of facts, but merely the way one thinker arranged his own ideas (SP, p. 67), but this remark scarcely alters Ford's frequent distortion of historical facts.

- 23 In political terms this was a reactionary scenario of history, and one of Ford's favourite catch-phrases—"homo homini lupus"—has been well described as "the battle cry against progress and socialism, [for those] who operate the bogey of the eternal human lupus in the interest of the real and bloody lupus of contemporary imperialism": Isaac Deutscher, "On Socialist Man," Marrism In Our Time (London, 1972), p. 236. The Latin phrase was also used by Freud in Civilisation and its Discontents. One of Ford's favourite proverbs, similarly, was that "it would be hypocrisy to seek for the person of the Sacred Emperor in a low tea-house".
- 24 IWN, p. 49; MOL, pp. 119, 142, 150. His aphoristic description of Heine as a "realistic-bitter romantic" (MOL, pp. 635/6) was perhaps a more exact summary of Ford's own mind than the "Aristotelian" label.
- 25 Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending (New York, 1967), p. 112.
- 26 Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 1780/1950 (Harmondsworth, 1961), p. 37; HJ, p. 47; see also RTY, p. 82. Many of the features of Ford's "feudalism", especially his love of its ceremonies, were to be recast after the war and adapted for inclusion into his later idealisation of the Provencal way-of-life. On Ford's "feudalism", see also Avrom Fleishman, Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad (Baltimore, 1967), p. 56.
- 27 Ford, for example, followed many Victorian historians in the belief that the Middle Ages were dominated by a "natural economy", in which trade was restricted to the immediate neighbourhood, money scarcely used and society dominated by land and custom. Yet the Belgian historian Pirenne has demonstrated the full extent of international trade during these centuries and how far the money economy, the cash nexus, had already penetrated town and countryside before 1200.
- 28 Cited in Hizener, p. 470.
- 29 Loc. cit.
- 30 As Cassell remarks, Katharine really loves the Catholic Church, not a mortal lover (Cassell, p. 120).
- 31 SE, p. 71.
- 32 WBTA, p. 11.
- 33 FE, pp. 24/5.
- 34 PS, pp. 375/6.
- 35 Ibid., p. 376.
- 36 Georg Lukacs, The Historical Novel (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 197.
- 37 Ford seems to take insufficient time to prepare us for the change in Katharine from a tough, resilient fighter to a resigned martyr, though this development itself isn't fundamentally improbable.
- 38 Hizener, p. 476.
- 39 Irving Howe, Politics and the Novel (New York, 1967), p. 25.
- 40 Fleishman, The English Historical Novel, pp. 209/211.
- 41 Samuel Hynes, "The Conscious Artist," The Times Literary Supplement, 3146 (June 15, 1962), 437/9.
- 42 Harold Rosenberg, "The Pathos of the Proletariat," Kenneth Rexley (Autumn 1949), reprinted in Irving Howe, ed., Essential Works of Socialism (New York, 1971), pp. 652/9.
- 43 George Plekhanov, The Role of the Individual in History (1898) (New York, 1940), p. 41.
- 44 Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto.
- 45 Georg Lukacs, Studies in European Realism (London, 1950), p. 145.
- 46 FE, p. 57.
- 47 Samuel Hynes, "Ford and the Spirit of Romance," Modern Fiction Studies, IX, 1 (Spring 1963), 22.
- 48 Cited in Goldring, The Last Pre-Raphaelite, p. 137.
- 49 Harvey, p. 29.



Chapter Four

Ford: The Georgian Novelist

"The place is vulgar, the time is vulgar.  
The language we speak is vulgar.  
So are the thoughts we think. Everything  
is vulgar. Even the air!"  
(Ladies Whose Bright Eyes, p. 344)

"There be summer queens and dukes of a day,  
But the heart of another is a dark forest."  
(Epigraph, The New Humpty-Dumpty)

One fine day in summer, shortly before 1914, Flood, an aristocratic landowner, is sitting in his club, staring out on the Embankment and calculating the relative numbers of motor-cars and horse-drawn carriages. The rest of Flood's class, London's smart 'society', has decamped to Epsom to participate in one of its annual rituals, 'The Derby', but Flood cannot even summon up the energy for trivial social intercourse. At one time he had espoused radical causes but he is now totally disillusioned with politics, as with everything else, believing that the structures of parliamentary democracy will soon be swept away by "corruption and boredom and dilettantism".<sup>1</sup> Flood is rich and has a fine intellect but he will not bestir himself to intervene; he is an "anachronism", completely withdrawn from the present and living as if in the early-nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Life, he believes, is only a "dirty comedy", at which he is content to be a cynical spectator, and he adopts Flight, an ambitious Jew, because he is amused by the opportunity to demonstrate that the possession of wealth will now open all doors, to the boardroom as to the boudoir: this is the London of 1913, the year of the Marconi Scandal.<sup>3</sup> At the conclusion of Ford's novel, Flood is successful, for his puppet has bought himself a seat in Parliament and a blonde, gentile wife. But the sponsor is, a year later,

still to be found in his club chair, counting London's traffic. The only change is that motor-cars are now fast replacing carriages.

Mr. Flight is a slight novel, unrefined by some crude political and literary satire.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the portrait of Flood, "lazier than a buffalo and prouder than a hog", illuminates Ford's own problems at the beginning of this decade, his personal difficulties and, more importantly, the obstacles he faced as a novelist.<sup>5</sup> It is the latter with which the critic is properly concerned and the crux of the problem appears to be the element of self-indulgence in all Ford's fiction of this period, before The Good Soldier. As one critic has noted, Flood "feels on the very object of his contempt, creating a cult of his own nausées" and Ford's conduct, as a novelist, is analogous.<sup>6</sup> Flood, Ford's hero, can find no mode of action in the present which will not involve him in a repetition of the violence he had committed earlier. (He had, we are asked to believe, killed his groom in America for having accepted a thousand-dollar bribe to dope his horses.) By way of compensation for his own impotence, Flood stage-manages the violent, improbable comedy which is the plot of Mr. Flight; the story is as unlikely as some of its author's own autobiographical fantasies. Ford, too, is baffled with the world in which he lives and assiduously cultivates his own punishment in the face of the amorality and venality he sees all round him.

As a means of exaggerating the world's ills and of escaping from them, the stock character of Ford's fiction between 1910 and 1915 is the honourable man beset by regains; the pattern of the plots is reducible to an account of the saint's suffering followed by his salvation through love. Thus in The Portrait (1910), Battersworth emerges from all his tribulations and a spell in prison with his high principles vindicated by the hand of the woman he loves and the winning of a £20,000 bet.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Scovell



in Ladies Whose Bright Eyes is anguished by the contrast between the chivalric idealism of Wiltshire in the fourteenth century and the urgent materialistic pressures of pre-war London; only the love of his wife, in the novel's contrived conclusion, restores his equilibrium.<sup>8</sup> The pattern recurs in The Parol where Ford's man-of-honour, Major Edward Foster, is finally united with his beloved after a series of tribulations, which are the price he pays for his upright principles.<sup>9</sup> Finally, The New Humpty-Dumpty shows us the Fordian idealist, Count Macdonald, leading a counter-revolution in Galicia, as a first step to that regeneration of the world in which he believes.<sup>10</sup> Of this here Ford noted, in an authorial comment, that

It is impossible to represent Macdonald as being in any way rational or coherent in his idealism. All that can be said is that he was consistently an idealist.<sup>11</sup>

To which admission the reader of The New Humpty-Dumpty may well reply that Ford did not there say "all that can be said" and that he was insufficiently critical of his idealistic hero. In an attempt to glorify Macdonald's heroic recklessness, Ford likens him, successively, to the otter who hides his nose in hay to escape the hounds, then to Thomas à Becket, and finally even to Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> But whereas in the Tudor Trilogy Ford had given considerable attention to the hounds who laid low Katherine Howard, in his Georgian fiction before The Good Soldier he has become myopically concerned with his martyrs to the exclusion of all else--to the exclusion of credible characterisation and of the creation of a realistic world.

Like his hero in Mr. Flaubert, Ford in these novels appears to be neurasthenically fascinated by the despair he projects onto his creations. We have been advised that "the rejection of politics is itself a political programme", that "to despair is also to act", but although this may be true

of politicians, the axiom is of less relevance to novelists. There must always be a hiatus between the writer's sense of an engulfing despair and the publication of a novel whose raw material is that sense, transmuted, emotion.<sup>13</sup> Ford, it would seem, was attempting in these novels to create art out of his own despair: their lack of success may be further evidence that a literature of despair - though not despair's politics - is a contradiction in terms. In his search for a novel that would communicate a sense of the experience of living at the abyss's edge, Ford experimented in a variety of forms: a parody of Restoration Comedy in The Portrait; the historical romance in Ladies Whose Bright Eyes; Feydeau farces, the stock of pulp-fiction, in The Fanal; and a Puritanian melodrama in The New Hamlet-Dumpty. He produced no fewer than seven novels between 1910 and 1915 and never again in his career was the range of forms attempted as wide as in this period. It's equally true that never again was he to write, so quickly, so many undistinguished novels: of the work of these years only A Call and The Good Soldier can now be read with any reward.

Part of the weakness of these novels can immediately be attributed to the lack in them of any "felt life", of any social and historical verisimilitude: we simply cannot believe in them. Deeper, though closely related, is the difficulty Ford evidently had, from 1910 to 1915, in creating a sense of time, of chronological development and progression in his fiction; and this is a failing that must be related to his subject-matter and, as well, to the world in which he was then living. In Mr. Fleish, for example, a year has passed but Klood still occupies the same chair and is thinking the same thoughts at the end as at the beginning; none of the intervening events seems to have affected him in any way. Nothing seems to have changed; nothing seems, in a literal sense, to have happened, despite the plethora of violent actions the novelist has narrated. Indeed

the numbness of his characters' withdrawal from an active engagement with life seems, in its turn, to have paralysed Ford, their creator.

This inability to communicate a sense of the passing of time wasn't merely a technical, formal problem: the "Fifth Queen" novels are sufficient evidence of Ford's ability to tell a story with coherence and credibility, and it's unlikely that these skills suddenly deserted the novelist. Rather, we can see that as Ford lost his belief in the efficacy of either of the major political parties in opposing the State's growing power and as he became increasingly sceptical of the whole mechanism of parliamentary democracy, so he was faced with the necessity of developing his own medium so that it could express this new pessimism. The panoramic, 'technicolour' chronicle of Tudor England was, we have seen, the perfect reflector of the archaism and regressiveness of Ford's commitment to Conservative traditions. After 1910, however, these traditions had no effective spokesman in English politics: in the following year Balfour, their representative, was replaced as Conservative leader by Bonar Law, whose affiliations lay with the Party's new business interests. Lloyd George's Budget of 1909 had polarised political life, but the resulting controversy centred only on the means to be used for financing social reform. Both parties were agreed on the necessity of social reform, the need for greater State control. Ford deplored what he saw as England's slide towards a Bismarckian state, but could discern no forces which would avert such a disaster. In his novels between 1910 and 1915 he was searching for a fictional form in which to communicate his own sense of helplessness. During this exploration there were several failures and it wasn't until The Good Soldier that he discovered a way of objectifying despair.

Only here did he light upon a means of communicating the numb monotony of a world in which time is not felt to pass, in which clocks seem to have stopped: that is, Dowell, the narrator of memory, illusion and retrospection. It is not the smallest irony of Ford's chequered career that by 1915 and the publication of The Good Soldier, that perfect metaphor of a society in crisis, the clouds had burst and the old world was disintegrating. Ford, too, had to move on, as he had done after The Fifth Queen Crowned, on this occasion to Flanders and finally to Parade's End.

Closely connected to the frenetic experimentation of these years - the sense we have of Ford picking up a new fictional mode, trying it out; then, in frustration, dropping it and moving on to a new possibility, unconcerned by the imperfect novel he leaves in his wake - connected to this flailing search is the widespread violence of the content of his Georgian novels. Husbands and wives are estranged, suicides seem almost commonplace and class is divided against class; indeed the 'stage' at the end of The Good Soldier is nearly as replete with corpses as in the last act of Hamlet. A comment on the violence embedded in these novels should not suggest that physical hurt is absent from earlier English novels, or indeed from Ford's Edwardian work. What, though, is noticeable in Ford's pre-war novels is the arbitrariness of the violence and, at the same time, the sense these novels convey of mental and physical cruelty being both fortuitous and, concurrently, quite typical and emblematic of the period; it is perhaps only in periods of deep social convulsion that violence can be viewed as both contingent and unremarkable. (Analogies can be located in E. M. Forster's novels of the same era, where violent and unexpected deaths frequently invade the placid gentilities of his scenes. Ford and Forster alike foretell the macabre democratisation of death, its unspeakable ordinariness, in Europe between 1914 and 1918.)

At first glance the violence we encounter in the Georgian fiction of middle-class novelists such as Ford, Forster and Saki seems only to be another manifestation of the widespread tensions of these years, for the period preceding the outbreak of war was undoubtedly a time of great turbulence.

More and more strikes; the conflict between the Commons and the Lords; the agitation by the Suffragettes and the Irish independence movements; the European political crises: everywhere they cared to look the propertied classes felt their security jeopardised, since all the movements of revolt seemed to have in common "the moral and economic destruction of Victorian capitalism."<sup>14</sup> Flood in Ford's Mr. Flaubert wasn't alone in fearing that the whole fabric of parliamentary government and liberal democracy might be in imminent danger of destruction. There was then, a historian has noted, "a widespread note of desperation, of hysteria, of pent-up passion, in all these events of the decade before 1914".<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, although these qualities were common in literature as in life between 1910 and 1914, a distinction must be drawn between the actions of, say, the Suffragettes, which were aimed at the righting of what was felt to be a social injustice, and the extreme deeds portrayed in Mr. Flaubert and The Good Soldier, the results of ignorance and even of a frustrated lassitude: whatever else they were, Georgian feminists were not bored.

However, in Ford's novels of this period, the infliction of pain is cousin to boredom, rather than the consequence of a verifiable social inequity that the ballot-box is unable to correct. Injury seems the result of his characters' inability to understand themselves and their intimates but is never employed as a tool to cure a public, social maladjustment. Certainly it is true that in his best work - in A Call and The Good Soldier - Ford demonstrated that his most perceptive characters were aware of the existence of rapid social change and he showed that their inability to govern their own lives was connected with the bewilderment they felt in the face of such upheavals. But their primary reaction was not to unite, as a class, to defend their interests but to fracture and quarrel amongst themselves. The suicides and sedition of these novels were, then, the actions of frightened



and frustrated people unable to understand their own circle or the changing world around them. In such circumstances, the aloof, aristocratic detachment of Blood and the cruel machinations of Florence Dowell were two sides of the same coin, both the product of a frustration endemic to this class at this particular time. Similarly the 'heroism' with which Ford endowed, so generously, the men of these novels was escapist and fugitive. It involved abdication and renunciation rather than confrontation and was perhaps a further strain of Georgian pastoralism. For these reasons it too often seems unreal, almost dilettante, an episcene delight in its own impotence.

Impotence - sexual, linguistic and social - is indeed the central theme of A Call, as the novel's epigraph suggests:

"We have a flower in our garden,

We call it Marygold:

And if you will not when you may,

You shall not when you wold."<sup>16</sup>

Robert Grimshaw, who looks like a seal or his own pet dachshund, 'wills not when he may' by donating the woman he loves, Pauline Lucas, to his best friend, Dudley Leicester, an "obtuse hypochondriac".<sup>17</sup> The latter, a wealthy young landowner, is reduced to a state of senile aphasia by an anonymous telephone call and spends most of the novel indistinguishable from "clothes carelessly thrown down".<sup>18</sup> Leicester has been cured before the end of the novel and has become Foreign Secretary: the country's male rulers are too weak even to control their own lives but are supported by a trio of very determined women. The novel indeed "offers a depressing view of the cultural decadence and neurotic indecision that beset Europe in the years just before the first world war".<sup>19</sup>

The shrewdest comment on the sexual and political paralysis of this class is offered by Leicester's servant, Saunders: "It's only gentlemen

and frustrated people unable to understand their own circle or the changing world around them. In such circumstances, the aloof, aristocratic detachment of Flood and the cruel machinations of Florence Dowell were two sides of the same coin, both the product of a frustration endemic to this class at this particular time. Similarly the 'heroism' with which Ford endowed, so generously, the men of these novels was escapist and fugitive. It involved abdication and renunciation rather than confrontation and was perhaps a further strain of Georgian pastoralism. For these reasons it too often seems unreal, almost dilettante, an episodic delight in its own impotence.

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And if you will not when you may,

You shall not when you wold."<sup>16</sup>

Robert Grimshaw, who looks like a seal or his own pet dachshund, 'wills not when he may' by donating the woman he loves, Pauline Lucas, to his best friend, Dudley Leicester, an "obtuse hypochondriac".<sup>17</sup> The latter, a wealthy young landowner, is reduced to a state of semile aphasia by an anonymous telephone call and spends most of the novel indistinguishable from "clothes carelessly thrown down".<sup>18</sup> Leicester has been cured before the end of the novel and has become Foreign Secretary: the country's male rulers are too weak even to control their own lives but are supported by a trio of very determined women. The novel indeed "offers a depressing view of the cultural decadence and neurotic indecision that beset Europe in the years just before the first world war".<sup>19</sup>

The shrewdest comment on the sexual and political paralysis of this class is offered by Leicester's servant, Saunders: "It's only gentlemen

of leisure who can think of their hate at all times."<sup>20</sup> Dress and deportment are the sole preoccupations of a man like Dudley Leicester, who had "never in his life done anything", and the novel renders with some success the hot-house atmosphere of a parasitic class.<sup>21</sup> A Call demonstrates that the mores of the ruling class, which Ford had analysed in England and the English, are dependant on emotional calm and this "honour" is helpless when faced with any strong feeling - jealousy, love or anger: "the facile sense of honour that is adapted only to the life of no strain, of no passions."<sup>22</sup> The regimen of the invalid had been erected into a code of conduct to govern the lives of healthy adults. Ford had, then, detected the dangerous naivety of this value, "honour", and A Call is successful in rendering the dislocations that result from the intrusion of genuine emotions into a society whose existence depends on their being repressed or ignored: as Pauline Lucas remarks, "We haven't learned wisdom: we've only learned how to behave. We cannot avoid tragedies."<sup>23</sup>

And yet, for all the novel's insights into the relationship between class, sex and political incapacity, D. H. Lawrence and Arnold Bennett were surely right in pointing to the novel's weakening lack of reality: Ford had seen so much but the final effect of A Call is slight.<sup>24</sup> The episode in which Leicester's ex-fiancée flirted with a farrier's son and caused him to break off their engagement is, in isolation, a Laurentian touch, reminiscent of The White Peacock, but the novel as a whole is considerably less than the sum of its excellent parts. A Call possesses the intensity and seriousness of a successful novel such as Parade's End and is much superior to anything else Ford wrote between The Fifth Queen Crowned and The Good Soldier: and yet, finally, its achievement is much slighter than its potential.

In his "Epistolary Epilogue" to A Call Ford remarked that he found Robert Grimshaw "an amiable but meddlesome and inwardly conceited fool" and the events of the novel, in which Grimshaw's own clumsiness causes him to lose Pauline and be yoked to a woman he doesn't love, do bear out Ford's strictures.<sup>25</sup> He went on to claim that his ambitions in A Call were Jamesian; that he "sought to point no moral", merely to tell a "plain tale":

My sole ambition was to render a little episode - a small "affair" affecting a little circle of people - exactly as it would have happened. I desired neither to comment nor to explain.<sup>26</sup>

Ford's comments here are of interest because they highlight the failure of A Call and indeed of all the novels of this period before The Good Soldier, the crucial point being that Grimshaw is not treated like a meddlesome fool nor is the "affair" presented with the objectivity Ford claimed. Rather, the cruel futility of the lives of Grimshaw and his set seems to have attracted Ford's admiring sympathy. In a fashion that runs counter to the novel's deepest perceptions, Ford seems to be condoning, even praising, Grimshaw's renunciation of Pauline because such abnegation is, the hero feels, the duty of "our class".<sup>27</sup> At one point, it is true, Grimshaw muses that "we're an idle, useless crowd", but he himself is too deeply implicated in the novel's arabesques to act as a critical voice, and Ford, for his part, is too close to Grimshaw.<sup>28</sup>

The strangely lifeless quality of A Call, which Bennett and Lawrence have diagnosed as the novel's failing, does not result, surely, from anything incredible in the behaviour of Ford's characters: after all, Nigel Nicolson's Portrait of a Marriage records, as documented fact, events among this class more bizarre than any Ford invented. No, the real mystery

is that a writer as perceptive and sensitive as Ford should have been 'conned' into mistaking the theatricalities of his own creations for honesty and sincerity. We can see —and so can Ford, from the safe refuge of his "Epistolary Epilogue"— that Grimshaw is a dangerous psychopath, but as soon as he starts to talk of sacrifice for the sake of 'civilisation' we can sense Ford being swept away by his hero's shabby idealism. At a period of great social instability Ford was desperately searching for any kind of idealism—even, in The New Humpty-Dumpty, that of an opportunistic adventurer—and his fiction before The Good Soldier is a saddening record of his inability to distinguish between the hero and the 'ham', magnanimity and mulishness. Of these failures and their relationship to the troubled history of the period, A Call is paradigmatic: the novel is weakened by the lack of any probing, sceptical irony with which to flail the self-deception of a Robert Grimshaw, and to throw a harsher, critical light on the 'civilised' values his class claims to be treasuring.

Ford's inability, in the majority of his seven Georgian novels, to combine objectivity and concern, to fictionalise the meaninglessness and despair he perceived around him without trivialising or brutalising it, cannot simply be reduced to the failure of a technique. Instead it can be seen as the result of his inability to comprehend, let alone sympathise with the world about him, for the gentility and fastidiousness of his earlier Conservatism could make little of the events of, say, the summer of 1911, when the threatened General Strike coincided with the Agadir Crisis in the Mediterranean. It's useful to be reminded by a recent study of this period that the Irish Crisis and the labour unrest were both remarkable for their order and discipline, and that the really dangerous manifestations of violence were international, not domestic.<sup>29</sup> It's undoubtedly true that English political life was less violent just before the War than it had been in the 1880's. These are indeed useful correctives to the earlier view that the years preceding the War were marked



by a general "pattern of extremism amounting to a pathological social morbidity."<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Ford's fiction of these years suggests that he, at least, was indeed profoundly sceptical of the future of democratic institutions. Likewise, the frequency with which a 'Coalition' government, to be above party and ideology, was canvassed between 1910 and 1914 is evidence of a widespread, though non-violent, questioning of existing parliamentary forms. From the perspective of the present Ford's Georgian novels, like the common belief that England was becoming 'ungovernable', may now seem hysterical and excessive. The fear of anarchy, justified or not, was evidently real enough at the time, and the political history of England between 1910 and 1916 is characterised by the search for a new form of government that bore fruit in the establishment of the Lloyd George Coalition in 1916. Ford's novels in these years were similarly unstable, yet an undue emphasis on his working life as the search for a perfect fictional form has implied that between The Fifth Queen Crowned and The Good Soldier he always knew what he wanted to say but merely lacked the means. However, the evidence of Ford's non-fiction of this period—Ancient Lights, Henry James, The Critical Attitude, his journalism and his two propaganda books—suggests that he himself saw the problem in different, rather more complex terms, terms indeed which give a more influential role to public stresses as conditioning factors in an artist's work. All these volumes, in different ways, attest to Ford's sense of derangement and helplessness that is manifested by his uneven work as a novelist before the War. The urbanity and detachment of Romance and The Inheritors were already unsuitable as ways of recording Ford's view of Georgian England and he had to find a different form, which could articulate breakdown and bafflement. In Reveries at this time the early work of Mann, Gide and Proust



is suffused with the sense of things not being what they appear to be, of contradictory versions of the same reality, of a deeper truth that cannot be explained but can only be glimpsed in moments of heightened  
31  
awareness.

With The Good Soldier Ford, too, found the means of expressing the new problematical reality for which he had been groping in A Call and Mr. Fleight. His non-fiction serves to place A Call and The Good Soldier in the context of the historical developments between 1910 and 1915.

Ford's ostensible subject in Ancient Lights is the decay he found in political and literary life following the Boer War, which he took to be the watershed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries or, in his own metaphor, the iron door "set between the past and the present."<sup>32</sup> Ford's method is to evoke the great figures of his childhood in the 'seventies and 'eighties—Rossetti, Morris, F.M. Brown—and to contrast them with what he saw as the pigmy literary world of 1911. Ancient Lights can scarcely be taken seriously as literary history. Victorianism as a cultural concept had expired before the South African War, and 'decay' and 'decline' are strange descriptions of a cultural world that was in the process of renewal and innovation. Leonard Woolf's portrait of the same year in Beginning Again evoked the excitement and sense of glorious<sup>33</sup> change in an era that, to Woolf, was far from defunct or moribund. Ancient Lights, too, is scarcely consonant with the receptivity to experiment and renewal that Ford himself demonstrated as editor of The English Review. But Ford's main aim here—as it had been in The Cinque Ports—was not to produce an account of the past that would satisfy the historian. Rather, he wished to create an adorned, "impressionist" view of the past in order to contrast it the more clearly with what he saw as a decadent present. The excitement Ford had experienced in first reading a short story by the young Lawrence finds no place in Ancient Lights because Ford's purpose here is to suggest the collapse of tradition rather than the process by which traditions were being reshaped and reinvigorated. The book is an elegy on the now-defunct Conservatism of Balfour and Salisbury.

Ford grants that there was less social justice in 1873, the year of his birth, than now, in 1911. (This was the year that saw the enactment of Lloyd George's monumental Insurance Bill. It was the first example of what the Social Imperialists, Ford's hated "Inheritors", had been working for since the Rosebery Revolt—a great measure of national reconstruction achieved above party divisions.)<sup>34</sup> Ford, however, complains that the amelioration of social conditions has been purchased at the cost of "individuality"; he is repeating, with more emphasis now, the keynote of his Edwardian trilogy, England and the English. the fight for individualism against the claims of the State. The incredible antics that punctuate Ford's Georgian fiction, the social and political recklessness of his characters, can be seen as an attempt, often ridiculous and always futile, to recapture the lost "individuality" of Ancient Lights. In many cases, the latter argues, life is more agreeable, yet it is greyer and less adventurous than in Ford's childhood. The great artists and writers of those years are used as a stick with which to beat the Social Imperialists of 1911.

'Characters' are employed to denigrate 'collectivists'. "We are making a great many little people more cheerful and more comfortable in their material circumstances", he admits, but this is less important than the fact that

"we are knocking for the select few the flavour of the finer things out of life."<sup>35</sup>

Faced by the choice between widening social justice or preserving the privileges of the minority, Ford is unambiguously clear: the doubts and hesitations recorded in the English essays between 1905 and 1907 have been resolved and Ford now stands for the preservation of inequality.

In adopting such a position in 1911 Ford was, of course, effectively cutting himself off from the Liberals and Conservatives alike, since both parties had by now committed themselves to social reform. While still maintaining that he doesn't yet know his political opinions, Ford offers a good deal of evidence in his concluding chapter (entitled firmly "Where We Stand") of the

development of his views since leaving the Liberal Club in 1908. He is surprised, he claims, that Ancient Lights has turned out to be a jeremiad, because really he only wants life to be a constant succession of little pleasures, and he even confesses to enjoying the present's greater politeness and civilisation. Actually, however, this materialism has soured him and Ford loathes the modern obsession with such practicalities of life as workers' insurance. "In a mild way", Ford writes, "I should call myself a sentimental Tory and a Roman Catholic", but the prevailing tone of Ancient Lights, as of his fiction in these years, is some distance from either mildness or sentimentality. Very close to the surface of the book, indeed, is a frustrated desire for a violent confrontation, a passionate resolution of social contradictions that was to find release in the splenetic New Humpty-Dumpty (1912) and Mr Fleight (1913).

H.G. Wells' novel of the same year, The New Machiavelli, also reveals a profound disillusionment with English public life, and it's interesting to compare the two works because Wells at this stage was enunciating the very collectivist doctrines that Ford had for years been opposing. And yet, although their attitudes and proposed solutions were so totally at variance, the two books have in common a distaste for the present. For Ford the homogeneity of Victorianism provided an escape from the present: his history is fugitive and escapist. Wells, on the other hand, saw the nineteenth century as the cause of the present impasse, "a hasty, trial experiment, a gigantic experiment of the most slovenly and wasteful kind."<sup>36</sup> Ford regrets the disappearance of the Victorian cultural order: to Wells the past is still regrettably alive, blighting the present. Ford looks back to an age of greater "individualism", Wells to the future, to the State's creation of "an era of construction, order, education, discipline."<sup>37</sup> By the end of the novel, though, Wells' hero, Basington, has become totally frustrated with English

political life, with "all this dingy, furtive, canting, humbugging English World", and he and his mistress escape to exile on the Continent.

Wells' tone and vocabulary here, bitter and soured, are close to the texture of much of Ford's Georgian work. Underlying both Ancient Lights and The New Machiavelli is a sense that the present can only be changed through violent means. Remington at one point prays "for a chastening war", imagining that the outbreak of war would be "a dramatic episode in the reconstruction" of the nation.<sup>39</sup> The cynicism and amorality that characterise both these visions of English political and cultural life in 1911 can apparently only be destroyed through violence. Both are symptoms of Europe's need for a "chastening" purgation, evidence that the outbreak of war was "an act both of fulfilment and of deliverance."<sup>40</sup> In Ford's case Ancient Lights suggests that he found it easier to objectify and distance his frustrations in the form of the literary memoir than in the novel. His fictions before The Good Soldier were a search for the novel that would give him the same control of his material than he gained from non-fictional forms.

Also published in 1911, The Critical Attitude is largely a garnering in a more permanent format of essays that had previously appeared in The English Review and in two other journals in 1909 and 1910.<sup>41</sup> Both in its general attack on art and criticism that is "Romantic"—a term of central importance in T.E. Hulme's aesthetic—and occasionally also in its verbal details The Critical Attitude is a markedly 'neo-Classical', Hulmian document.<sup>42</sup> It is related to Ancient Lights in that Ford's yardstick is once more the great Victorian figures who had, in his view, helped propagate a single social and philosophical attitude, generally accepted in the previous century, what a later historian has called "the homogeneity of society and intellect, a synthesis of progressive politics and moral art."<sup>43</sup> This was what Ford calls "sentimental altruism" and was the foundation of, say, Tennyson's verse and Eliot's Adam Bede. Victorian art was "Romantic" in



Hulme's sense, because it concerned itself with making "humanist" generalisations about life and erecting a moral system by means of intellectual synthesis. Ford argues, though, that this unified code has now fractured and that his society is now in a period of transition between the past and an unknown future: "the old order....is changing; the new has hardly visibly


<sup>44</sup> arrived." And so for Ford all social and political questions are now immensely complex. He can't discover one single belief upon which he can draw, confident of its general acceptance, but instead perceives myriads of conflicting ideologies, all claiming man's approbation. It is this condition that Shannon has described as a "sense of psychological bereavement, of morally isolated individualism" that was the consequence of the age's loss of religious and melioristic faiths. <sup>45</sup>

The cultural programme of liberalism before 1914 was founded on the refurbishment of the Victorian ideal of a "collaborative relationship between society and art", and Liberals believed that their political ascendancy after 1906 "would result in a new wholesome integration of art and the march of the mind." <sup>46</sup> This indeed was Masterman's design in The Condition of England (1909). But the modernism that Ford was voicing in The Critical Attitude was sceptical of any such melioristic theory of politics and history. His age being a "dance of midges", Ford believed that the modern writer shouldn't aim at making moral statements, at generalisation and synthesis of the kind exemplified by the neo-Arnoldian Condition.

Ford's writer should simply concentrate on throwing "light upon the human heart", because in a time of isolation and alienation the public is in "danger of losing alike human knowledge and human sympathy." <sup>47</sup>

The Critical Attitude is an early articulation of the split between the melioristic realists and the innovative modernists.



At a time when the vitality of 'liberal democracy' was felt to be problematical and there were calls for the abolition of 'party' government, it's no surprise to find Ford characterising his world as fragile and evanescent. Nevertheless, The Critical Attitude is a more responsible, active book than Ancient Lights, since Ford is now seeking a remedy, searching for some aesthetic code that will fill the vacuum left by the collapse of 'Victorianism'. Indeed he holds that literature and the arts, together with their attendant criticism, now have a more vital function in the republic that is torn with dissension than in the age of the "ancient lights", the Victorian sears, those "school-master  endowed with great moral prestige." <sup>48</sup> Now, in these changed conditions, the artist has the opportunity to guide and educate his readers without browbeating them; to show them, in Ford's Jamesian metaphor, the pattern in the confusing, multi-coloured carpet that is modern life, without establishing another set of "spiritual dictatorships." <sup>49</sup> This can no longer be effected through the synthesising intellect, in the fashion of Galsworthy and Wells, but only through an aloof, detached and remorseless "registering" of "life as it really is." 'Realism', as represented by the fiction of Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett, was ineffectual because its malicioristic and rationalist attitudes linked it with the discredited Victorian sensibility. Thus The Critical Attitude associates itself with the movements of renovation and recreation then current. For example, Virginia Woolf's analysis of the function of the modern novelist in her Bennett essay is remarkably similar to Ford's, even though they differed in their practice as novelists. Like the divine manicurist, the artist of James Joyce, who was also formulating a new poetics of fiction at this period, Ford's imaginative artist, and the critic, "must, as far as possible, put aside sympathy with human weaknesses", and be content to "register" his age, registering in a "splendid aloofness", for only in this fashion can he show us life "whole". <sup>50</sup> E.M. Forster, too, was searching for a 'wholeness' in his pre-war fiction: it is striking how the same terms and attitudes are clustered

together in these years. "Essentially the function of the novel", Ford continues, is "to render life, even though its ultimate aim should be to make life a better thing", and he criticises the fiction of his contemporaries because of its failure to "render" and its preference for the attractions of the social 'cause', or for the escapist creation of unreal, "heroic"

<sup>51</sup> figures. Joyce, too, in A Portrait of the Artist, had shown his artist moving towards a similar position, rejecting the temptation to use his writing in the service of Irish nationalism. Such temptations are among the vices of "Romantic" art, of "dilettantism", and spring, Ford argues, from the artist's refusal to confront the unheroic, muddled present. "We live", he sternly concludes,

in our day, we live in our time, and he is not a proper man who will not look in the face his day and his time.<sup>52</sup>

The Critical Attitude was, then, very plainly a manifesto, a call for action, a programme which was to be executed with great success in The Good Soldier, the most "aloof", "detached" and "remorseless" of Ford's novels. Nevertheless, from 1910 to 1915, the relationship between theory and practice in Ford remained problematical, and the road to the world of Ashburnham and Dowell was littered with Ford's failures to translate perplexity into adequate 'classical' terms.

What needs stressing about Ford's programme in The Critical Attitude, and his various attempts to implement it in the novels between A Call and The Good Soldier, is that criticism and fiction alike were both founded on a set of social assumptions far removed from the malieristic liberalism of Masterman, Galsworthy and Bennett, and equally distant from the social reformism to which both parties had by now come to subscribe. In The Critical Attitude and the accompanying novels a writer's concern for material improvements is at best irrelevant, at worst (as, Ford argued, in the case of Galsworthy) corrosive. Indeed the implicit basis of The Critical Attitude

is the astringent neo-classicism of T.E. Hulme, whose political sympathies were far to the right of Bonar Law's Conservative Party and of Liberalism, regarded by him as a dying, "humanist" aberration. 53 In its abhorrence of all sentiments—an aversion which, transmuted into fiction, may topple over into a self-indulgence that is, paradoxically, replete with sentimentality—The Critical Attitude anticipates some of Ford's least humane comments about the benefits of war in 1914 and 1915. While not an explicitly political book, The Critical Attitude nevertheless enunciated a set of attitudes that had a distinctly political dimension. Ford's aversion from both parties and his disillusionment at the development of the Conservative Party is paralleled by his belief that the artist was incapable of making order out of chaos and should not be tempted to employ his art in the service of a particular 'cause' or party. Such an exercise, Ford suggests, is doomed to failure, because in 1911 the material upon which the novelist must work is too recalcitrant and no simple rational structure can now be expected to embrace all the paradoxes and mysteries of the contemporary world. Instead, Ford states, the novelist should concentrate on catching a few glimpses of the individual heart, forswearing the all-embracing Victorian coherence. The assumptions underlying Ford's Edwardian roman à clef, The Inheritors, and his Tudor trilogy had been centripetal, in that he had posited the novelist's sensibility at the centre of the world, capable of pulling together and reconciling contradictions. The trilogy and The Inheritors had both been versions of allegory, allusive commentaries upon political life which assumed that the latter was amenable to synthesis and comprehension. For all their differences, the roman à clef and the historical novel share a common foundation in confidence and stability: the external world can be grasped as a whole and hypostasised. Neither kind of novel can easily be created out of a world that seems absurd

or unknowable. By 1910, however, Ford's thinking about the relationship between the novelist and his material is altogether less assured. The relationship has become centrifugal: social beliefs and institutions are conceived as whirling outward to a distant circumference that the artist was unable to control. A neat Newtonian world has given way to the astronomy of 'black holes' and incalculable distances. Ford, like Hulme, believes that the intellect is impotent to gain control of the "flux", the "dance of midgets"; what replaces the synthesising capacity of the artist is his ability to "register" his environment in a manner analogous to the procedures of the Bergsonian "intuition".

These beliefs, which are central to an informed response to The Good Soldier, were also elaborated in Henry James (1913), the first full-length study of the novelist. As a scholarly, academic critique of James, Ford's book is of slight value, yet it does indicate with some precision the nature of its author's preoccupations as war approached. Aside from its intrinsic interest as a highly-readable response to James' canon from a fellow-novelist, Ford's essay suggests some of the socio-aesthetic attitudes that underpin The Good Soldier, the novel on which he began work in this same year.

The main point about Henry James is that Ford used James' fiction as an illustration of the theories adumbrated in The Critical Attitude. Ford demonstrates that James' methods, the felicitous ambiguities and elusive parentheses of his style, were in fact perfectly attuned to the society in which he was writing.<sup>54</sup> For Ford in 1913, James' value is that "he is the only unbiased, voluminous and truthful historian of our day", a writer who can render Edwardian and Georgian high-society without being overbearingly dogmatic or moralistic.<sup>55</sup> Through his meticulous portrayal of the "affaires" of the leisured classes, James could hint at the existence, or absence, of

basic human values without resort to the explicit moral statements of the Victorian "novelists".<sup>56</sup> The case Ford here makes out for James'

importance is based upon a recognition of the particular, specific difficulties created for the artist by contemporary conditions, and the whole argument is grounded upon his appreciation of the skill with which James surmounted these problems. Ford contended that "you cannot write about Euripides and ignore Athens" and so he delineated the social context within which James had to operate as a factor which neither James himself nor his critic could afford to overlook.<sup>57</sup> Hence Ford's approach in

Henry James is, we may claim, 'historical'. In practice this means that three-quarters of the book is directed to examining the novelist's umbilical relationship to his subject-matter, the Anglo-American bourgeoisie, the conclusion being that the refinements of James' style are a vivid expression of his subjects' devotion to the indefinite statement, the imprecise vagueness. At a period when, Ford argued, no one particular theory was dominant and the Victorian homogeneity had splintered, what was needed from the novelist was not another set of dogmas but rather "a ray of light

[cast] into the profound gloom, into the whirl of shadows, of our social agnosticism."<sup>58</sup> At a time of bewildering transition only the novelist,

Ford believed, can rescue us from the whirlpool of conflicting ideologies, only he can "give us the very matter upon which we shall build the theories of the new body politic."<sup>59</sup> The novelist's vocation is not to publish

theories, only to provide the facts, of human motivation and ambition, upon which theories can be built. Hence in an illuminating way Ford associates the perplexities of contemporary life, the "dance of midges", evanescent and transient, with the very methods James chose to render that world.



For all their distinct local differences, these three books, Ancient Lights, The Critical Attitude and Henry James, are linked by their common preoccupation with the literary and artistic world at the turn of the century. Ford's other non-fictional prose of these years, his journalism and his two propagandist essays, doesn't have this same concern. Yet this material shouldn't, on that score, be neglected, for it does, in fact, cast a quite revealing light on the contemporaneous fiction. Ford's Outlook essays are, indeed, remarkable for the frankness with which they record their author's reactions between the early months of 1914 and January 1915. The fullness of their testament more than compensates for the absence - for the first time since 1904 - of a full-length book from Ford in 1914.

In January 1914 Ford sounded supremely confident in his adherence to the 'feudal' ideals of the ruling-classes and was contemptuous of anyone who reneged on those ideals. His tone is aristocratic as he asks his Outlook readers

How can a man, an educated man, a man ex-officio a member of the ruling-classes - or any man who can read at all - hold the vast number of contradictory opinions that are necessary to a 'Progressive' of today?<sup>60</sup>

Even when we have offset the gaininess of this question with the fact that Ford, the son of a German music-critic with but slight material resources, was always tempted to affect the drawl of the upper-middle classes, we are left with clear evidence that Ford is now disowning those "Progressives" he had welcomed to the pages of his English Review as little as five years earlier - men as far from being illiterate as Hobson and Cunninghame Graham.



In another article in similar vein, published in May 1914, Ford lends his support to W.H. Mallock, a right-wing Conservative, and is to be found arguing that in 1914 "there are no poor in the sense that there were poor in 1801."<sup>61</sup>

Two months later, on the eve of war, he is registering his disgust with the Liberal Government, and especially with its Foreign Secretary, for having riled the Kaiser. At the outbreak of war, then, Ford's thinking was dominated by his

intense dislike of liberal democracy with—as he thought—its shady capitalists, venal politicians, and an electorate stuffed with fatuous ideas of its own wisdom by a shoddy system of universal education.<sup>62</sup>

Ironically, Ford shared his distrust of parliamentary forms with some of the very men whose Social Imperialism he had long been attacking. As early as 1902 the Liberal League had been arguing that the wasteful party system was unable to counter the "ubiquitous threat of national decline" and had<sup>63</sup>

been calling for non-party solutions. The multi-party membership of the Coefficients Club (1902) had also been symptomatic of the decomposition of old party loyalties and the Club's successors, Milner and his

'Compatriots' (1904/1914) were also convinced of the bankruptcy of two-party government. These "socialists of the Right" envisaged a solution through a "national government", which indeed came to power under Lloyd George in December 1916. Their platform was modernisation, "organisation<sup>64</sup>

and efficiency, social reform and national revival." Ford, from the opposite position of an aristocratic traditionalism shared their disaffection with parliamentary democracy, but looked instead towards

"a feudalism he imagined had been gallantly chivalric" and which he had fictionalised three years earlier in Ladies Whose Bright Eyes.<sup>65</sup>

After the declaration of war in August, Ford's first published comment was indeed to decry its lack of chivalric glamour. As the first soldiers were perishing in Flanders, Ford claimed that he had no objection to men dying but that he was disturbed by the imbecility of the ideals for which they sacrificed their lives, the tawdriness of modern nationalism.<sup>66</sup>

In the first week of war the author of The Good Soldier is arguing that the hostilities will have been worthwhile if they prove to the survivors that they are feudal serfs, with duties but no rights. Three weeks later Ford invited his Outlook readers to consider Germany as the "gallant enemy" rather than the leathed foe versified by the jingoist poets of the day. Though confessing that he disliked Germany for, among other reasons, its growing "socialism", Ford urged these poets to extract poetry from the war instead of hatred.<sup>67</sup> The novelist who, a decade later, was to write one of the century's noblest anti-war novels, began the war in a flush of frustrated idealism, defending militarism because it "has, or implies many high qualities."<sup>68</sup> Indeed it was not Prussia's war-machine Ford hated so much as the way that bureaucratic state, with its dangerous "socialist" tendencies, had asphyxiated the idealisms of youth.<sup>69</sup>

Ford's abhorrence of 'liberal democracy' and his nostalgia for an altruistic, hierarchical 'feudalism' were stated most fully in his two books of propaganda published in 1915, When Blood Is Their Argument and Between St Dennis and St George.<sup>70</sup> Though their ostensible subject is the materialism and chauvinism of Germany and though both defend Britain's entry into the war, Ford's real concern seems to be with British political institutions in peacetime. At the heart of these books lies Ford's belief that Britain had become too much like Germany, too "socialist", too "materialist". They contain the fullest and most explicit statements of Ford's hostility to collectivism and State power, the theme that had been

preoccupying him since The Inheritors. Ford's attack here on his father's nation must be placed in the general context of English attitudes to Germany in the pre-war epoch. In particular it's necessary to remember that for the Social Imperialists Germany offered both a model and a threat. It was a threat both militarily and economically, and English Social Imperialism was in many ways a response to the reality of Germany's superior economy. Social Imperialism was the vehicle of the new industrial ethic, "that of science, technology, the professional manager, and the corporate society", designed to combat Germany's growing might. Chamberlain's Tariff Reform, his "squalid argument", was a reaction to increased competition from Japan, U.S.A., and Germany, and in particular to the problems faced by the iron and steel industries of the Midlands.<sup>71</sup>

However Germany provided English thinkers and politicians with a paradigm for development as well as an indication of the urgency of modernisation. In several areas—in government, in the army, in industry, in higher education, but not, significantly, in culture where France offered the examples and stimuli—Germany was the country to which English reformists looked for a lead. Many of the leading figures in the Social Imperialist movement had deep intellectual affiliations with Germany. William Cunningham, the Tariff Reform economist, had been educated there. Sir William Ashley had close connections with the German school of economists, the "Socialists of the Chair". One of the leading 'Limps', the Free-Trade Liberal Imperialists, R.B. Haldane, has recorded in his Autobiography how strongly German models influenced him in the development of a political philosophy. He had studied in Göttingen in 1874, when only seventeen, and proceeded to Dresden in the following year. Haldane's active life in British politics, first in the Liberal Party and then in 1924 in the first Labour Cabinet, was shaped by these crucial German experiences. In particular the German system of higher education, which Ford attacks so vehemently in his two propaganda books, impressed Haldane and directed his own reforms of

London University and the provincial and Irish universities. To many English politicians, then, the Germany created by Bismarck indicated how the pressures for democratic reform, from the Socialist and Labour movements on the left, might safely be drawn off. The English working-class electorate might be saved from the left by similar measures of social reform. Consequently the Liberal Government's programme from 1906 to 1914 was fundamentally Bismarckian, "a combination of Radical social reform and imperialist foreign and military policy."<sup>72</sup>

To Ford, on the other hand, Germany was the living embodiment of his nightmare of total State control, which he had forecast as early as 1901 in The Imaginators, a vision of the collectivists' bloodless coup. His two propaganda books of 1915, as well as reflecting much of that year's popular anti-German feeling—which had forced Haldane from the Cabinet—must also be viewed in the context of Ford's growing antipathy to Germany as a political model for English collectivists. His excoiation of Germany for its "mania for organisation", its "impersonalism", and for erecting a system in which everything must tend towards the glory of the State went far beyond what was then required in sponsored attacks on German militarism.<sup>73</sup> For Ford they were, rather, the climax of his long attacks on English reformers. When Blood argues for the return of "altruism" as a political philosophy to replace a Bismarckian "materialism" because Ford holds that "no really satisfactory art and no really great culture can arise except in an era of noble personal ideals and aspirations." As well as trying to inspire Germany's military defeat, these two essays warn Britain that its own political parties, through their commitment to mass social reform, had approached dangerously close to Prussian materialism.<sup>74</sup> At the beginning of the war, then, Ford was obsessed with extremes: like T.H. Hulme, his vision was Manichean. He saw political and private life as a simple choice between a Prussian materialism and a Gallic altruism.<sup>75</sup>

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These indeed are the stark alternatives posed for the State in When Blood and Between St Dennis and St George. For the individual and the family a similar choice is presented, in the more complex, imaginative terms of art, in The Good Soldier.

In publishing a wide range of political opinions, Ford's English Review had been tolerant and pluralist. Now, in 1914 and 1915, Ford sounds much more 'hawkish' as he advocates a return to a rigid, hierarchical, decentralised, quasi-feudal form of government, one in which men estimated their relationship to the State in terms not of rights but of duties. Ford's target here is the vision of the State's role held by, for example, the Webbs with their "faith in a deliberately organised society....in the application of science to human relations with a view to betterment."<sup>76</sup> Or the "new spirit" perceived by Haldane in 1906, "a spirit that was moving the democracy to go beyond the old-fashioned Liberal tradition, [which] would be content with nothing short of a demonstration that the democracy was for the future to have the last word."<sup>77</sup> Ford's alternative to these developments was nothing if not "old-fashioned". When Blood's sketch of his utopia, which Ford contrasts with the dystopias of English Fabianism or the welfarism of Bismarck, indicates its nostalgic unreal mediaevalism:

I should like to see revived a state of things in which  
port wine and long leisures over the table, and donnish,  
maybe rather selfish, manners and highly gentlemanly  
traditions, possibly a little too heavy drinking, and  
classical topics for discussion--in which all these  
things were considered to be the really high standard of  
living.<sup>78</sup>

Such attitudes are, Ford concedes, anachronistic and regressive. They have to be "revived" only because they are dead, whereas in The Inheritors Ford's models of behaviour, though threatened, had been alive. In another



illuminating passage in When Blood Ford admits again that these are "exploded traditions", and that his personal tragedy (and Ashburnham's, too) is that he continues to adhere to a set of principles formulated by a class (and a party) that has now discarded them. Ford's position, then, has become more embattled because the Conservative Party had shifted from its aristocratic and landed affiliations under the leadership of Salisbury and Balfour, to a new fidelity to the business interests signalled by the dominance of Chamberlain and Bonar Law. The relevant passage, though lengthy, deserves full quotation because it clarifies the attitudes that underlie Ford's fiction between 1910 and 1915 and how these were related to what he took to be the apostasy of the Conservatives. "I am a man", he confessed

an unfortunate man—unfortunate in the sense that all men of forty or less, the world over, are unfortunate. For I came into, and took very seriously, English public-school life at a time when the English public-school spirit—in many ways the finest product of a civilisation—was already on the wane. I took its public traditions with extraordinary seriousness—the traditions of responsibilities, duties, privileges and no rights.

And, in consequence, he continues

I cannot now get away from the impression that I have the responsibilities and the duties of my station, and that if I perform them efficiently I shall possibly have certain privileges accorded to me. But as to a right—I have never known the feeling of having any right at all to anything. It is still ingrained in my bones—the idea that I must give unceasingly all that I have to the world, and that in return some day, with luck, some one will spill me a little....

But, he concludes,

These are, in fact, exploded traditions, here or  
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anywhere else.

In all this aristocratic abnegation there is, of course, a sizeable theatrical element. Ford Madox Husser, with his paternal roots in the German petty bourgeoisie, is here claiming to bear the burdens of an alien class. The real aristocrats, whose miserable existence Ford is appropriating as his own, had acted more decisively and pragmatically; few of them had passively waited to be spoiled a little. For reasons of his own Ford is pre-empting the right, to which he was entitled by neither birth nor wealth, to have no rights. This was precisely the gap, between Ford's lofty assumptions and the banal realities of his life, which rendered his existence so frequently bathetic, and yet to the novelist these "exploded traditions" were immensely fecund, giving birth to his two best works. The Good Soldier indeed explores the tension between the world of an idealised romanticised aristocracy and the reality of debts, mortgages and marital dishonour. Ashburnham's courage is a sightless virtue.

An act of genuine courage was Ford's decision to enlist in the army, soon after the completion of When Blood Is Their Argument and Between St Dennis and St George. The long-term effect of his war-service was undoubtedly to blur the certainties proclaimed in these two works, although as early as January 1915 he was admitting that he had "nothing but questions left in the world" and was "conscious of a profound moral change".<sup>80</sup> Discussion of the war's effect on Ford is best postponed since the marks it left on him - apart from his physical deterioration - only became visible in his fiction of the 'twenties and 'thirties and he published no novels during the war. As regards the short-term effects of the war and the nature of Ford's development between 1910 and 1919, there is no reason to doubt Douglas Goldring's contention that Ford left the army in 1919

very much advanced in his political thinking. His "ivory tower" period was definitely ended. All humanity was now his preoccupation. He was spiritually prepared for the advance from being a good novelist to becoming a great one.<sup>81</sup>

Though Goldring is here pitching his claims for his friend a little too high, the general drift of his comment is surely just. After the war Ford's fiction does evince a new breadth of sympathy and he becomes alive to international issues that are wider - if not always more successfully portrayed - than the pre-war novels' interest in the ethical minutiae of one particular class, real or fantasised. The war was, then, a truly educative and liberating experience for Ford in the way that "a catastrophe, whether it be personal or social, is always a great touchstone, because it infallibly reveals the true personal or social connections, not the show ones".<sup>82</sup> For Ford, as for so many of his generation, the war was a catastrophic touchstone, showing him, through personal and communal suffering,

the real nature of the world. As he noted in a letter written shortly before his death, four years of conflict destroyed the "Fine Illusions" he had cherished that faith, loyalty and courage were the mainsprings of human action.<sup>83</sup> Many of the uncomfortable questions he had become aware of by January 1915 were to be settled in the next four years: the decade between his editorship of The English Review and his demobilisation in 1919 was the most momentous of his life.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 MF, p. 275.
- 2 Ibid, p. 8.
- 3 Ibid, p. 193.
- 4 The critical consensus is rather more flattering to MF. Thus Cassell praises it as "varied, interesting" (Cassell, p. 138), and Hoffmann, quite misreading the novel's political details, describes it as "a multiple satire of the Edwardian /sic/ Age" (Hoffmann, p. 70). Huntley, similarly, argues that it is a novel which successfully dramatizes historical change (Huntley, p. 159), and Ezra Pound called MF "a flail of compositives": Frank MacShane, Ford Madox Ford: The Critical Heritage (London, 1972), p. 56. P. L. Wiley adjudged it a "remarkable novel", the best before GS, with a comprehensive "grasp of the essential nature of prewar society" (Wiley, pp. 170/1), and Misener calls MF "the most powerful of Ford's satiric attacks on the contemporary world" (Misener, p. 235). Without a doubt MF is a fascinating historical document, by virtue of the light it throws on the conflict in the pre-war bourgeoisie between 'birth', 'Blood', and money, 'Mr. Fleight'. This was well analysed in Miss Wingfield-Stratford's The Victorian Aftermath, p. 51: "the landed gentry were fighting a losing battle, and so hard pressed were they that few of them could any longer afford to disregard the main chance." Amy Cruse, too, has commented on Ford's insight in MF into the 'new journalism' of Tit-Bits and The Daily Mirror: After the Victorians, pp. 202/3. Nevertheless, for all its sociological perspicience, it can hardly be rated highly as a work of fiction. Ford's characters are quite improbable and his plot hasty and bizarre. On the question of Ford's anti-semitism in MF, see Renee Winegarten, "Ford Madox Ford - Zionist," Midstream, XII (August/September, 1966), 71/5. MF can also be compared, in this respect, with an Edwardian best-seller, Guy Thorne's When It Was Dark (1903), in which a Jewish multi-millionaire succeeds in subverting the whole of 'western civilisation' by seeming to prove that Christianity is a gigantic fraud. The novel powerfully illustrated the English bourgeoisie's fear of the Jew: Claud Cockburn, "Best Sellers of the Century," Observer (November 14, 1971), 15/20. For Ford's comments on the decay in public life between 1900 and 1914, and the importance of the Marconi Case, see RTI, p. 351.
- 5 MF, p. 7. The autobiographical elements of MF have been widely noted: Misener, p. 114, Misener, p. 237 and p. 526, n. 10 ("in all important respects /Blood/ is an image of what Ford wanted to be himself"). Ford's remarks about his own political scepticism in 1915 remind us of Blood's apathy in MF (SDG, p. 45). Furthermore "Mr Blood" reappeared in Ford's journalism and was clearly regarded affectionately by his creator: Harvey, pp. 180, 204.
- 6 Huntley, p. 6.

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The novel was dictated at a time of great personal stress for Ford, following his dismissal from ER and his own marital entanglements: Misener, p. 194. His biographer regards it as "a spirited and professional performance" (Misener, p. 199), and Willey even goes so far as to compare it with Heart of Darkness (Willey, p. 116). Other critics, however, have little to say in favour of FOR (Hoffmann, pp. 51/2, Meixner, pp. 65/6). It is a trivial, pseudo-historical potboiler.

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LOWE was written in 1910, after Ford had returned from a short spell in prison, the consequence of an estrangement from his wife and his contesting of her legal rights: Misener, p. 198. LOWE went into several editions between 1911 and 1920, and appeared in a much-revised edition in 1935: Harvey, p. 34. Ford was apparently influenced by Twain's A Connecticut Yankee At The Court of King Arthur (loc. cit.), and a letter to Pinker, the celebrated literary agent, suggests some possible titles for the novel (Ludwig, op. cit., p. 45). On the value of the 1935 revisions, see R. A. Cassell, "The Two Sorrells of Ford Madox Ford," Modern Philology, LIX (November 1964), 114/121; Hoffmann, pp. 60/3; Misener, p. 484, n. 31. Meixner has a high regard for LOWE (Meixner, pp. 67/80), but despite its earlier popularity it is now generally regarded as a weak novel, "a crude vehicle for Ford's medieval idealism" (Huntley, p. 151), and "one of his duller works" (Willey, p. 122). With its rather naive romanticisation of the Middle Ages, it is an illustration of the process Lukase identified as "romantic reaction": "The Ideal of the Harmonious Man in Bourgeois Aesthetics," Writer and Critic and Other Essays (London, 1970), pp. 89/102. LOWE is a flimsy novel, with little to detain the adult reader.

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Ford's own comment on PAN, in his "Dedication", was that it was a "very unhistoric comedy", "so frivolous a book". In a letter dated June 3, 1912, Ford says that it was written in "about a month", and a few months later was suggesting that he didn't care too much for the finished product. PAN was adapted into a play in 1914, but was never, apparently, produced. Ford's final published comment on the book was that it was "a bad book, but.... would make a good film": Harvey, p. 37. Ford's critics have so far been more indulgent, Hoffmann calling it a "light, frothy comedy" (Hoffmann, p. 64). Meixner writes similarly of the novel's "surprising deftness", and of its being "full of verve and spirit" (Meixner, p. 146), while Misener finds PAN "often quite amusingly silly stuff" (Misener, p. 221). On the other hand, The Times Literary Supplement's reviewer in 1912 found the narrative "dull and ponderous" (Harvey, p. 311). The most lasting impression left by this insubstantial work is of Ford's inability to write in a comic vein. One interestingly unorthodox view of the novel is offered by Thomas Moser, who contends that the hero resists women "out of anxiety about the mechanics of sexual relations" and believes Ford to have been laughing at his hero's ineptitudes: "Towards The Good Soldier - Discovery of a Sexual Theme," Pendulum (Spring 1968), 312/313.



- 10 It is strange that a reviewer as intelligent as Rebecca West should have discovered in NHD "fine detail and lucid statement of complex adventure": MacShane, The Critical Heritage, pp. 40/41. Miss West granted that some of the satire was incomprehensible, but in general her notice was warm and welcoming. The plot in fact is a series of baroque improbabilities, and not one of the characters is remotely credible. Sergius Macdonald is a 'decadent', sick man in his absorption in the picturesque, aesthetic qualities of the counter-revolution. He is reminiscent of the anarchist poet, Laurent Tailhade, who asked "What matter the victims, provided the gesture is beautiful?": George Plekhanov, Anarchism and Socialism (1895), cited by Irving Howe, ed., Essential Works of Socialism (New York, 1971), p. 202. Ford's Macdonald is a classic illustration of the "aestheticisation of politics".
- 11 NHD, p. 366.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 330/1, 340.
- 13 John Strachey, The Strangled Cry (London, 1962), p. 11.
- 14 G. D. H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People, 1746/1946 (London, 1949), p. 450.
- 15 David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, 1815/1914 (Harmondsworth, 1954), ch. ix.
- 16 Ford claims that this is a Somerset folk-song. CALL was serialised in ER in 1909, but its theme and the atmosphere of anarchy and confusion suggest that it should be considered alongside his other, Georgian, novels. A minor critical debate has been staged around the question of Grimshaw's sexual impotence in CALL. Lid had implied that Ford's "Jamezian manner" had prevented him from writing honestly about this topic - "the story he wanted to tell" (Harvey, p. 469), and Ohmann (op. cit., pp. 49/62) and Moser (op. cit., 320/2) argued similarly that the unwritten story of CALL is Grimshaw's fear of sex. Misener, on the other hand, has contended that Ford did believe that Grimshaw's conflict between passion and duty was genuine, and it is, therefore, wrong to suggest that he was evading the real issue: Misener, p. 484. The latter argues persuasively that in CALL Ford was able to admire an ordered society in spite of its cruelties, but he fails to delineate the historical pressures on Ford to give his allegiance to 'order' rather than to 'justice'. Hynes places CALL within the general controversy of the period over the relationship between the sexes, to which Wells' Ann Veronica was also a contribution: Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind, p. 194.
- 17 CALL, p. 14.
- 18 IMA, p. 140.
- 19 Lionel Stevenson, The History of the English Novel (New York, 1967), XI, 78.
- 20 CALL, p. 132.
- 21 Ibid., p. 46.
- 22 IMA, p. 281.
- 23 Ibid., p. 274.

- 24 In a letter of November 1909 Lawrence had written that CALL, "has more art than life": Harvey, p. 549. Bennett, in a very intelligent review, had admired the novel's fairy-tale qualities, but found it unrealistic: "I consider 'A Call' to be profoundly and hopelessly untrue to life. It treats of the lazy rich... Mr. Hueffer endows these persons with a comprehensive fineness of perception, and a skill in verbal expression, which it is absolutely impossible that they, living the life they do live, could possess....But regard 'A Call' as an original kind of fairy tale, and it is about perfect": New Age, VI (March 17, 1910), cited in Harvey, p. 303. The whole review is reprinted in MacShane, The Critical Heritage, pp. 33/35.
- 25 CALL, p. 301.
- 26 Ibid, pp. 303/4.
- 27 Ibid, p. 34.
- 28 Ibid, p. 153.
- 29 Shannon, op. cit., p. 447.
- 30 Loc. cit.
- 31 Hughes, op. cit., p. 365.
- 32 AL, p. 175. A contemporary review of AL, though generally favourable, complained that Ford (now 37) was too young to have the privileges of a laudator temporis acti: Harvey, p. 306. Ford's sub-title, "Memories of a Young Man", was surely a conscious echo of George Moore's Confessions of a Young Man (1888).
- 33 Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again (London, 1964), p. 37. Ford's uncle, William Rossetti, felt obliged to produce a full catalogue of his nephew's factual errors in AL: MacShane, The Critical Heritage, pp. 117/121.
- 34 Scally, op. cit., ch. viii.
- 35 AL, p. 270.
- 36 H.G. Wells, The New Machiavelli (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 39.
- 37 Ibid, p. 205.
- 38 Ibid, p. 367.
- 39 Ibid, p. 267.
- 40 Bernard Bergonsi, "Before 1914: Writers and the Threat of War," Critical Quarterly, VI, ii (Summer 1964), 126/134.
- 41 Harvey, p. 135.
- 42 Echoes of Hulme's vivid, aggressive, highly metaphorical style can perhaps be heard in Ford's comment that "all our modern life is a dance of midges": CA, p. 186. Further attention to Hulme is paid in the chapter below on CS.
- 43 Shannon, op. cit., p. 269.
- 44 CA, pp. 128/9.
- 45 Shannon, op. cit., p. 272.
- 46 Ibid, p. 279.
- 47 CA, pp. 183, 67. Thus Ford believed that his aunt, Christina Rossetti, was a "modern", un-Victorian poet, because she illustrated human emotions unpretentiously and wasn't concerned with building moral and intellectual systems. On the other hand, Ford wrote, Galsworthy's humanitarianism and Wells' didacticism harmed their fiction. They should, he argues, have confined themselves to the topography of the "human heart".
- 48 CA, p. 124.
- 49 Ibid, p. 66.
- 50 Ibid, pp. 21, 34. On the influence of Ford on Ezra Pound, see Eric Humberger, "Pound, Ford and 'Prose': The Making of a Modern Poet," Journal of American Studies, V, iii (December 1971), 281/92.
- 51 CA, p. 15.
- 52 Ibid, p. 187.

- 53 T.E. Hulme, Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art, ed. Herbert Read (London, 1936); Further Speculations, ed. Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, 1955). On Hulme's politics, see also Alun R. Jones, The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme (London, 1960); John R. Harrison, The Reactionaries (London, 1966). For an account of the anti-feminist implications of Hulme's aesthetic, see Edward Brandabur, "The Eye in the Ceiling and the Eye in the Mud; T.E. Hulme's Comedy of Perception," Papers on Language and Literature (Fall 1973), 420/7. Support for the close connections between Hulme and Ford as early as 1909 is offered by the marked similarities between Ford's ER piece of January 1909 and Hulme's lecture delivered in 1908 or 1909: Cyrena N. Pondrom, "Hulme's 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry' and the Birth of Imagism," Papers on Language and Literature, V, iv (Fall 1969), 465/70.
- 54 In this insight Ford rather departed from Hulme's theories. Although he followed Hulme in his theory of the irrelevance of an artist's subject-matter, in his critical practice Ford senses that James' importance is a product of what he chose to write about, and the freedom he negotiated for himself within the social and political circumstances in which that choice was made. Hulme's position was that "nature's" only importance was that it could suggest forms which it was the neo-classical artist's duty to develop without resorting to a mechanical reproduction. Ford, on the other hand, drawing upon his historical sense and his experience of two decades as a novelist, knew that the forms of nature, in particular the social forces obtaining in the writer's society, did in fact circumscribe the artist to an extent greater than the theorist, Hulme, could grant.
- 55 HL, p. 66.
- 56 An "affair", in Ford's sense, was "a parcel of life...in which several human beings are involved" (CA, p. 89). It didn't possess the sexual connotations of the word's common usage, although obviously erotic complications were frequently an ingredient of the "affair".
- 57 HL, p. 16.
- 58 Ibid., p. 66.
- 59 Ibid., p. 48. If, in his early 'pre-Raphaelite' days, art had had a quasi-religious function for Ford, now, in 1913, it seems to be regarded almost as a substitute for political science.
- 60 "Literary Portraits—XVIII: Mr. A.G. Cardiner and 'Pillars of Society'," Outlook, XXXIII (January 10, 1914), 46/7, cited in Harvey, p. 179.
- 61 Outlook, XXXIII (May 30, 1914), 751/2, cited in Harvey, p. 190.
- 62 Hazlitt, p. 249.
- 63 Socially, 99, cit., p. 35.
- 64 Ibid., p. 245.
- 65 Hazlitt, p. 249.
- 66 The war was "a product of the indefinite, mysterious, and subterranean forces of groups of shady and inscrutable financiers working their wills upon the ignorant, the credulous, the easily swayed electorate...": Outlook, XXXIV (August 8, 1914), 174/5, cited in Harvey, p. 198.
- 67 Outlook, XXXIV (August 29, 1914), 270/1, cited in Harvey, pp. 199/200.
- 68 Goldring, The Last Pre-Raphaelite, p. 168.
- 69 Outlook, XXXIV (September 19, 1914), 367/8, cited in Harvey, p. 201.

70 Ford began WBITA in September 1914, and published both books in 1915. They were written at the behest of his old friend Charles Masterman, then in charge of Government propaganda. In 1926 Ford was to claim that BSDG was the book by which his name would be remembered (MTF, p. 9), and it was warmly reviewed by Rebecca West (MacShane, The Critical Heritage, pp. 51/4). Two generations later it now seems that WBITA has 'worn' rather better than BSDG. For a general survey of the attitudes of the British intelligentsia to the war, see Katherine Andrews, "The Necessity to Conform: British Jingoism in the First World War," Dalhousie Review, LIII, ii (Summer 1973), 227/45. The over-simplified quality of Ford's response to the war can be paralleled in the writings of Zangwill, Frederic Harrison, Kipling, the Chestertons, Bennett and even Henry James.

71 Solly, op. cit., p. 24.

72 Semmel, op. cit., p. 27.

73 WBITA, p. xi.

74 Ibid., p. 88.

75 In BSDG Ford attacked those intellectuals and groups who opposed British intervention on behalf of Belgium ("the saddest story in the chronicles of the world"): Shaw and Bertrand Russell, the "intellectual fictionists"; Fenner Brockway; the Union of Democratic Control and the I.L.P. Hulme had similar targets in his pre-war essays of 1916. These essays, "Inevitability Inapplicable", "The Kind of Rubbish We Oppose", and "Why We Are In Favour Of This War" were first published in The Cambridge Magazine in January and February 1916; they have been reprinted in Further Speculations, ed. Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, 1955), pp. 174/87. Hulme and Ford had been personally acquainted for several years, and shared similar aesthetic views. On the question of the war, which was soon to kill him, Hulme's stance was that evil was an integral part of the world, and that man's achievements had all been due to his creation of systems of order and discipline. He saw German aggression as a threat to western civilisation, built by centuries of ordered restraint of man's Original Sin, and he identified Russell—who bore these assaults with great composure—as a species of Antichrist, a prepositional of the whole post-Renaissance socio-political tradition, which was nationalist, humanitarian, and believed with foolish optimism in the possibility of progress being achieved through the development of the human personality, instead of its pathology. Hulme granted that his philosophy was "heroic or tragic", even pessimistic in positing certain values above human life itself. War was to him a lesser evil than the sloppy "romanticism" he saw undermining civilisation. His "ethic", as he put it, "is not...bound to condemn all sacrifice of life" and he therefore found no difficulty in defending the war (ibid., p. 200). Hulme's values, as applied to art in such essays as "Modern Art and its Philosophy" and "Romanticism and Classicism", and in relation to politics, are close to Ford's philosophy as it is adumbrated in WBITA and BSDG. At this period, too, Ford was an absolutist, believing in a set of values that were hierarchical and non-relative. Professor Hynes has labelled Hulme the "intellectual policeman", more important as a simplifier and polemicist than as an original thinker: Rhidian Occasions (London, 1972), pp. 123/8.



- 76 Beatrice Webb, op. cit., p. 97.  
77 Richard Burdon Haldane, An Autobiography (London, 1929), pp. 212/3.  
78 WBITA, p. 300. The implied exclusion of women from Ford's heaven in 1915 perhaps reflects the bitterness and impossible complexity of his private life at this time. The 'gods' in this 'pantheon' are also, notably, the consumers of wealth produced by others. In his post-war visions of the idyllic life Ford stresses the moral and ecological virtues of being a producer of goods. Moreover, in this later version, in PROV and QTR, women and children were to be admitted.
- 79 WBITA, p. 301 (emphasis added).  
80 Outlook, XXIV (January 2, 1915), 14/5, and XXIV (January 9, 1915), 46/7, cited in Harvey, p. 203.  
81 Goldring, The Last Pre-Raphaelite, p. 202.  
82 Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution (New York, 1957), p. 45.  
83 Ludwig, op. cit., p. 287; the letter is dated February 1938.

Chapter Five

The Good Soldier

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Towards the end of the last century the English upper class faced an unusual crisis. Their power was in no way threatened; but their own chosen image of themselves was threatened. They had long since accommodated themselves to industrial capitalism and trade, but they had chosen to continue the way of life of an hereditary, landed elite. This way of life, with its underlying assumptions, was becoming more and more incompatible with the modern world. On one hand the scale of modern finance, industry and imperialist investment required a new image of leadership; and on the other hand the masses were demanding democracy. The solution which the upper class found was true to their own character: it was both spirited and frivolous. If their way of life had to disappear, they would first apotheosize it by openly and shamelessly transforming it into a spectacle: if it was no longer viable, they would turn it into theatre. They no longer claimed (except purely verbally) justification by reference to a natural order: instead they performed a play upon a stage with its own laws and conventions. From the 1880's onwards this was the underlying meaning of Social Life - the Hunts, the Shoots, the Race Meetings, the Court Balls, the Regattas, the Great House Parties.

(John Berger, G. Penguin, 1973, p. 40)

When he wrote The Good Soldier Ford was still using the name of his German father, Hueffer, and nothing illustrates his German roots so clearly as his sustained fascination with the dynamics of illusion and reality among the English bourgeoisie. As an alien, Ford could not possess Ashburnham's or Tietjens' innate familiarity with the minute tremors of class behaviour, but, like Dowell, he was uneasily fascinated by a foreign code. Indeed the theatricality of the English upper-class had been a perpetual source of wonder to Ford for a decade and a half: The Benefactor, The Inheritors, A Call, The Spirit of the People all are attempts to anatomise that highly-stylised theatre to which Berger alluded. Ford's failures in this area stem, in part, from an outsider's inability to decode a complex rhetoric of speech and gesture, to demarcate the boundary between play and life, though the importance which Ford assigned to the behaviour of his chosen minority must be linked to



factors wider than the accident of his own Anglo-German pedigree. The anecdotal germ of The Good Soldier - there related as Dowell's drive to a railway-station behind a couple chatting inconsequentially despite their inner turmoil - had made its first appearance in England and the English. Ford's return to, and development of this incident bespeak his continuing fascination with the questions it raised for him as, through a decade's germination, an episode in an essay was transformed into a novel's Joycean epiphany.

The Good Soldier is, then, a climactic novel in terms of Ford's own career, the most successful rendering of a theme which had so long absorbed him. Yet it doesn't provide any kind of exorcism, for the problems of which it treats could only be resolved either by its author's complete endorsement of a code from which he was, by birth and by class, alienated - that is, his commitment to all the illusions of the theatre of 'good people'; or, alternatively, through Ford's abjuration of the morag of Edward Ashburnham, a step for which he was, as yet, unprepared. The growing maturity of Ford's art is, rather, a result of the new clarity with which he can portray credibly the tensions between belief and social agnosticism. The Good Soldier does not present us with the agonies that result from conversion, the painful resolution of social tensions, as will Parade's End in the 'twenties. Instead, from its opening pages, The Good Soldier records with verisimilitude the pull and counter-pull within Dowell as he tries to persuade himself that the "long, tranquil life" he has enjoyed for nine years, the stately "minuet" of his existence with Florence, Leonora and Edward - the "good people" - is extant, immortalised in some distant heaven. Working against this idealisation of the past is the narrator's certainty that in fact their foursome was "a prison full of screaming hysterics".<sup>1</sup> Which of these two incompatible views, Dowell vainly wanders, is the truth: the 'theatre',

elegantly directed and costumed, of their public, visible lives; or the 'sub-text', barbarous and anarchic, of their private acts? Even the terms in which Dowell formulates this question support the relevance of the theatrical imagery to the problem he is considering as he enquires

if for me we were four people with the same tastes, with the same desires, acting - or, no, not acting - sitting here and there unanimously, isn't that the truth?<sup>2</sup>

"Acting or not acting" - the problematic and provisional nature of 'sincerity' in Dowell's circle - is, of course, a crucial question in a novel with such a high incidence of feigned heart-conditions. The Good Soldier, notoriously, provides no answers to Dowell's constant self-interrogation. Indeed the whole form of the novel, so totally uninterested in the arousal of any suspense in the reader - and Ashburnham's suicide at the end must be one of English fiction's least surprising denises - militates against the novel's utility as a problem-solving device. What it does offer instead is a consummate portrayal of the masochism and frustration of the English bourgeoisie before the war, with Ford now capitalising, positively and for the first time, on his own bewilderment. Mr. Fleight, a pencil sketch for The Good Soldier, had been vitiated by Eland's stunned disengagement from human society: Dowell understands little more than Eland but, at least until the last two chapters, is prepared to question everything and to ruminate extensively. Ford's 'discovery' of Dowell allows him to treat in fictional terms what he had previously only explored discursively with any balance, in The Critical Attitude and Henry James: the evanescent and transient quality he found characteristic of his own world.

Although The Good Soldier was widely felt, in 1915, to undermine those very values necessary to the successful waging of the war, the novel does in fact share several values with the orthodox militarist viewpoint, since, out of the pervasive chaos and scepticism for which Dowell acted as a focal-point, Ford constructed a novel that proclaimed the potential of order and discipline. To the impercipient reader of 1915 a novel from Hueffer, set, in part, in Nauheim and Marburg, and which ended in a 'good soldier' killing himself with a penknife, was tantamount to espionage. What the British reading-public needed, and received, was Ian Hay's best-seller of that year, The First Hundred Thousand, to<sup>3</sup> reassure an ailing morale. And yet, notwithstanding its superficial lack of tact, never Ford's strongest suite, The Good Soldier is fundamentally a 'soldierly' book, the product of a general-artist with supreme power over his own fancies, the work of a master fictional strategist. (In Germany, likewise, Thomas Mann was producing Frederick and the Grand Coalition: An Essay for the Day and the Hour, in which Mann wrote as "the artist who resembles a soldier, the maker of an art compounded of the extremes of enthusiasm and order".)<sup>4</sup> The same combination is discernible in The Good Soldier.

The highly ordered formal structure of The Good Soldier is also strangely similar to the nature of the political state for which Ford's "inheritors", the Social Imperialists of all parties, had been striving for a decade and a half. There is an ironic parallel between the discipline of Ford's novel and the Social Imperialists' vision of the State established on a quasi-militaristic model. In all the statements of Social Imperialism the concept of 'efficiency' is crucial. Ford's, too, is a notably 'efficient' novel in which each paragraph has a function and none is gratuitous or dispensable. The faith of all these groups—the Tariff Reform League, the Coefficients Club, the Liberal League—in the concept of 'social engineering', in the importance of the State

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intervening to reshape the social fabric, is paralleled, in the terms of fiction, by the self-consciousness with which Ford designed and ordered his narrative material. The value of 'expertise', likewise, is a belief held in common by the novelist and by the political thinkers to whom he had long been so hostile. To the Webbs, government ought to be conducted by "an elite of unassuming experts who...would content themselves with exercising the power inherent in superior knowledge and longer administrative experience." Ever since the time of his collaboration with Conrad Ford had been proclaiming the novelist's professionalism and his claim to membership of an artistic elite. Much of his life was to be devoted to advancing the respectability and responsibility of his own artistic fiction, just as the Webbs were committed to raising the status of political administration. Even The Good Soldier's implicit claim to be "above party", politically disinterested in the terms laid down by The Critical Attitude, is cognate with the ambition of Social Imperialism to appear neutral and aloof, above all narrow party interests. One of the recent historians of this period has noted that all the movement's various constituent bodies--Liberals, Conservatives and Socialists--shared the same catchwords: "efficiency, expertise, mastery, discipline, race survival, unity, fitness." From this list of the seven characteristics of the future nation, as its salvation was envisaged by the Social Imperialists, six are immediately perceptible in the formal aspirations of The Good Soldier and even the seventh, a concern for the survival of the Anglo-Saxon race that was so stressed by the movement's 'eugenicist' theorists, Francis Galton and Karl Pearson, is reflected in the novel's interest in the extinction of the Ashburnham 'line'. The formal constituents of The Good Soldier are almost, as it were, a miniature, in fiction's terms, of the State then being designed by the collectivists of the right.

The ironic dimension of these likenesses between a novel and the theories of some contemporary political thinkers lies, of course, in the novelist's stated antagonism to these same theories. Ford's production of a novel so spare, pruned and efficient isn't, however, evidence that he had finally cast in his lot with the social engineers, with the "inheritors". On the contrary, as his portrait of Leonora suggests, he maintained his earlier hostility to the ambitions of the political modernists. With the Conservative Party now being led by Bonar Law and Lloyd George's increasing dominance of the Liberal Government, Ford felt deeply unsure of the prospects for "individualism". It is this perplexity and pessimism that are recorded through the highly engineered form of The Good Soldier. H.G. Wells had chosen a markedly 'individualistic' form, the fictional memoir, subjective and reminiscential, to narrate the career of the collectivist, anti-individualist Remington in The New Machiavelli. Equally striking is Ford's recourse to the authoritarianism of his opponents as a means for transforming into literature his own frustrated individualism. The Good Soldier is another illustration from this period of the familiar conjunction of political elitism with artistic impulses that were modernist and innovative:

The modern consciousness, concerned to insist on the lefty 'seriousness' of art's purpose and the need for formalistic structure and technical innovation, was fully attuned to an elitist social stance. The idea of resistance to the pressures of a mass or 'bourgeois' reading public became in itself one of the primary tenets of the new consciousness.<sup>7</sup>

The Good Soldier stands alongside the work of Hulme, Eliot and Pound as a further example of the collapse of the Victorian faith in "the homogeneity of society and intellect, a synthesis of progressive politics and moral art."<sup>8</sup> Of equal interest as an indicator of this cultural collapse is



the absence from the pages of Our Partnership of any affiliations between "progressive politics" and a modernist culture. Webb's account of the year 1911 makes no mention of the cultural revolution then taking place in London: she was engaged in publicising the Poor Law Commission's "Minority Report". The modernity of this Report and the innovations of The Good Soldier were, then, formally similar and politically antagonistic.

The Good Soldier was, then, as factitious as any complex military or Fabian strategem, the most ordered of Ford's novels. Nor was Ford unaware of the dangers inherent in such a structured, deliberate fiction, writing in January 1914, while he was still dictating The Good Soldier,

of course I know that there is the danger of  
becoming too flawless, arid, soulless, and so on...<sup>9</sup>

"The cold, clear flame" that was his high objective, his austere fashioning of perplexity could, he saw, become too arctic, too translucent, altogether too rarefied in a genre as committed to contingency and the

unfreesen as the novel. Ford's own later comments on The Good Soldier seem designed to convince us that this novel was the first on which he lavished any considerable attention, although, plainly, a great deal of research underpinned the achievement of his Tudor trilogy. In those novels, however, Ford's energies had been directed towards the quasi-archaeological task of bringing to life a vanished milieu: he took elaborate trouble with the 'locations' and costumes of The Fifth Queen but the relaxed and conventional form of the trilogy, inherited from Scott, scarcely exemplifies the rigorous poetics of the novel on which he had been labouring with Conrad at the turn of the century. Now, though, Ford crosses the line between conventional and innovative, between "Traditional" and "Modern"; with The Good Soldier Ford concentrated powerfully upon the conceptual and the a-historical, upon the management and deployment of his scenes to bring out most clearly a patterned design. Thus his nineteenth novel was his first - and, arguably, his last - sustained attempt to offer a coherent illustration of the theories, demanding and monolithic, he had long been preaching. Over Parade's End, too, he was to spare no efforts, but never again was Ford to be so driven by, above all, the search for a novel of perfect facticity.

Ford was frequently his own worst critic, yet the comments he recorded during the composition of The Good Soldier do in fact serve as a remarkable guide to his intentions for that novel. What we now need, he wrote in 1914, is

a novel uniform in key, in tone, in progression, as hard in texture as a mosaic, as flawless in surface as a polished steel helmet of the fifteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Ford's prescription, his hunger for lucidity, is notable for its indifference to a large proportion of the novelist's customary concerns: historical

realism, dialogue, characterization, narrative delight and moral fervour. Indeed so tangential seems its connection with any conventional novel of the time - with, say, the fiction of Bennett, Wells or Galsworthy - that it is hardly surprising that Ford should borrow even his similes from the non-linguistic arts of music and sculpture. That underlies this blueprint for The Good Soldier - for such it effectively was - seems to be a concern with the effect that the novel should have on the reader when it is recalled and recollected in tranquillity as a whole autonomous construct, separated from the experience of reading the work over a period of several hours. Ford thus aimed to produce an impression on his reader analogous to that achieved by a sculpture whose shape can be perceived in a fraction of a second. The limiting factor here, of course, is the imperative of all fiction that a novel must be read over a certain, more or less substantial, period of time. What Ford's statement seems to be implying is the necessity in reading The Good Soldier for us to bring into operation some kind of distancing strategy whereby we can, as it were, suspend judgment of a character's moral health during the reading-process, concentrating instead on the place of a chapter within an emerging design. Such, at least, would seem to have been Ford's intention, and the novel that met these exacting specifications, which were demanding in equal measure of the reader's professionalism, would thus exist as autonomous and discrete, perceived spatially as a finite block of material like a mosaic or a burnished helmet, but enfranchised from fiction's usual temporality.

Dowell himself, Ford's narrator, addresses his attention to this point, the choice between time or space as the novel's axis, at the beginning of the second chapter, confessing uncertainty as to

how it is best to put this thing down - whether it would be better to try and tell the story from the beginning, as if it

were a story; or whether to tell it from this distance of time, as it reached him from the lips of Leonora or from those of Edward himself.<sup>11</sup>

He proceeds to reject the first, chronological, possibility and opts for a narrative method that will preserve the appearance of the casual and spontaneous. (The extemporaneous and the fabricated, anarchy and control are The Good Soldier's shaping dialectic.) Indeed the chapter that follows his musing over the best presentation of his material ranges extensively and, it seems, extra-logically over a wide terrain of reminiscence, yet all is controlled by the likely leaps of Dowell's consciousness: from Peire Vidal in mediaeval Provence to John Hurlbird's Waterbury factories and from Dowell's first glimpse of Florence to his recent summons to Fordingbridge. These pages, then, provide us with the answer to Dowell's question: his rapid jumps are, in fact, the means he will adopt for the whole of the novel. The narrative method which Dowell abandons, "tell~~ing~~ the story from the beginning, as if it were a story" - as if it were like, say, The Old Wives' Tale, which moves forward confidently from the sisters' childhood to their old age - implies the existence of a causative principle which, for Dowell as for Ford, was absent from their world; it was a framework which implicitly asserted an order in human affairs. And yet the raw material for such a novel, a conventional novel, can certainly be extracted from The Good Soldier in a process to which the French nouveau roman is unamenable. Thus, to choose only one example, Ford might have elected to begin his story with the Hurlbirds' departure from Hampshire in the seventeenth-century on the grounds that it was Florence's desire to return to this country which, in part, led her to accept Dowell's proposal, thus setting in train the sequence of events that led to her and Edward's suicide. But if The Good Soldier had begun at this point or, more probably, at the birth of Dowell, the eldest of the quartet,

the narrator would have had to accept a view of human history and its effects on individuals' lives to which he could not subscribe. The whole point of Dowell's choice of narrative method, under Ford's superintendence, is precisely to bring out the pointlessness of events, their lack of a sequential principle of cause and effect. In this sense is The Good Soldier not a "story" but, as it were, an "anti-story", proceeding from a recognition that what Stuart Hampshire has called "unfractured prose" - in Dowell's phrase, "the story from the beginning" - can only be utilised as the medium for representing citizens to themselves in a social and historical setting which they can recognise as their own and which they believe determines their existence and identity.<sup>12</sup>

Dowell dissented from a belief that the existence of his "quartet" was determined by an extensive, public, temporal setting, the whole structure of implicit assurance that had held aloft The Fifth Queen. He rejected the nineteenth-century's positivism, claiming instead that the reality of events lay only in his own perception of them - however fractured, subjective and uncertain was this cognition.

Ford's idea of the novel as a "polished helmet" does, then, imply an abjuration of the affluent, chronological novel that is similar to Dowell's refusal to construct his narrative "as if it were a story". Dowell's choice, in its place, of a digressive mode, which accumulates emotionally rather than historically, is given the appearance of the casual and unpremeditated as he determines that, in his words,

I shall just imagine myself for a fortnight or so at one side of the fireplace of a country cottage, with a sympathetic soul opposite me.<sup>13</sup>

In truth, however, this unceremonious narrative posture is exceedingly

demanding of both narrator and reader. Dowell's decision to converse "in a very rambling way", as "a sort of mass", because "real stories", as opposed to fictions, "are probably told best in the way a person telling a story would tell them", is an exacting choice, because, as he puts it,

It is so difficult to keep all these people going. I tell you about Leonora and bring her up to date; then about Edward, who has fallen behind. And then the girl gets hopelessly left behind.<sup>14</sup>

Dowell must therefore combine the most disavowing prestidigitation with the illusion of sitting at ease by a fireplace, and the strain of this procedure leads him, at one point, to wish that he could tell his story "in diary form". We know that Dowell is indeed a diarist, but a chronological narrative would be inappropriate for a story intended to communicate the absence of any nemesis or driving historical force. At the outset Dowell had likened himself to an historian, the witness to the "sack of a city or the falling to pieces of a people" who desires to record what he has seen "for the benefit of unknown heirs or of generations infinitely remote". Such historical ambitions are, however, thwarted by his own scepticism: here is an annalist whose only reliable archives are his own impressions.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in Schorer's phrase, "from the very delimitation of form arises the exfoliation of theme"; historiography itself is in jeopardy.<sup>16</sup>



Ford's radical challenge to the very roots of Western historiography, that determined post-Renaissance attempt to schematize the past - the whole tradition Hulme dismissed as "humanist" and decadent - isn't simply to be understood in terms of Ford's own idiosyncratic historical fancy. It cannot be separated off, as just an adventurous exercise in private myth-making. Ford's ambition to produce a novel that was "hard" and "flawless" in its own solid autonomy, and his employment of Dowell to juggle for this purpose, wasn't merely an individual, quirky whim. On the contrary, with the benefit of hindsight, we can now discern that Ford's efforts between 1913 and 1915 ran alongside the main currents of literary and artistic modernism. In particular The Good Soldier's abandonment of lineality in favour of a spatial mode is but a further manifestation of modernism's basic ahistoricism; Dowell's repeated juxtapositionings effectively eliminate any chance of an historical sequence being erected.

Joseph Frank, one of the early historians of modernism, has argued that the fundamental feature of the work of such writers as Eliot, Pound, Proust and Joyce was precisely this: that the reader is meant to apprehend "spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence".<sup>17</sup> A good, innovative example of this process Frank discovered in the country-fair scene in Madame Bovary, where the time-flow of the narrative is halted "and the full significance of the scene is given only by the reflexive relations among the units of meaning".<sup>18</sup> (In like manner, Ford's narration of the ill-fated trip to Marburg in the fourth chapter is broken off with Dowell's ominous awareness of "something treacherous, something frightful, something evil in the day"; not until later, after reflection and reminiscence, do we perceive the full meaning of this epiphany.)<sup>19</sup> Frank, then, contended that this narrative

method, essentially The Good Soldier's, was basic to modernism, to Ulysses, to Proust and to Barnes' Nightwood.

After thus establishing modernism's fundamental constituent, Frank postulated Worringer's Abstraction and Empathy (1908) as a seminal influence on Hulme and, through him, on English modernism. Worringer, the German aesthetician, had set out to explain the continual pendulation in history between naturalistic and non-naturalistic styles, that swing in Ford's art, for instance, from The Fifth Queen to The Good Soldier. His argument was that non-naturalistic forms didn't spring from any deficiency in knowledge but from a differently-directed "will-to-art" (Kunstwollen) existing in quite different historical circumstances. Naturalism was for Worringer a function of man's feeling of either equilibrium with, or dominance over his environment - Vertraulichkeits-verhältnis in Worringer's German text. Likewise, disharmony and disequilibrium would issue in non-naturalistic art-forms, being the product of a fear of the external world or of a religion (Byzantine, Gothic) that totally rejected the natural world. T. E. Hulme, Frank continued, tried to apply these principles to literature but his "classico-romantic" antithesis only clouded the issue. What he should have examined was literature's spatial form, since this is the exact literary complement to the non-naturalistic developments that were taking place in the plastic arts. This, Frank concluded, is modernism's formal reflection of its ahistoricism; it continually juxtaposes aspects of the past and present, as in Dowell's fractured narration, so that they are fused in one comprehensive view which attempts to transcend historical limits and encompass all times. Modernism's history, in Frank's words,

is no longer seen as an objective, usual progression in time, with distinctly marked out differences between each period, but is sensed as a continuum in which distinctions

between past and present are obliterated.<sup>20</sup>

And so the depth of history, as in The Fifth Queen's rich polysynthesis, has vanished from the modernist novel, wherein both past and present are seen spatially.

The objective historical imagination, on which modern man has prided himself, and which he has cultivated so carefully since the Renaissance, is transformed <sup>by</sup> Eliot, Pound and Joyce<sup>7</sup> into the mythical imagination for which historical time does not exist - the imagination which sees the actions and events of a particular time merely as the bodying forth of eternal prototypes. These prototypes are created by transmuting the time-world of history into the timeless world of myth. And it is this timeless world of myth, forming the common content of modern literature, which finds its appropriate esthetic expression in spatial form.<sup>21</sup>

Now while The Good Soldier doesn't possess the explicitly mythical framework of Ulysses or "The Waste Land", Ford was surely mythopoeic to the extent that he was bent on showing that "the actions and events of a particular time", the lives of his several "screaming hysterics" were embodiments of "eternal prototypes", not determined by the historical specificity of a set of cultural and social forces especially influential at the turn of the century, among a particular class. (Dowell's vision of 'The Day of Judgment' would be a good, brief, illustration of The Good Soldier's drive towards the mythical.)

It could be argued, on the other hand, that The Good Soldier records, as its basic theme, the return of Americans to the land they left in the seventeenth century. Certainly Dowell, the American millionaire, does purchase Branchaw from the exhausted Leemora at the end of the novel and

turns the mansion into an asylum; the Ashburnham family is extinct. Equally, Parade's End and Ford's work of the 'thirties do develop this theme of the growing American presence in the Old World. However, such an analysis would distort The Good Soldier, because Ford has chosen as narrator a figure who dissolves historical time. Central to Dowell's consciousness is a belief in a "darkness" of the human heart that overleaps anything as specific as the changing economic and cultural relationship between Britain and the United States from, say, 1890. Dowell's agnosticism is indeed extended beyond the bounds of the handful of lives delineated in The Good Soldier: the phrase "It is all a darkness", which brings to a close the novel's first chapter, reverberates throughout and is accorded a quasi-mythical stature as Dowell's summation of his experiences: the phrase would tell the knell of epistemology.

His story, the narrator remarks at one point, has none of the elevation of tragedy; it has no nemesis, no destiny and no villain; it is merely a record of drift, deterioration and decay, sad by virtue of the pointlessness of "Two noble natures, drifting down life, like fireships afloat on a lagoon..."<sup>22</sup> The people involved in the final, most corrosive 'triangle' - Nancy, Leonora and Edward - all foresaw the inevitable outcome of their entanglement, but could do nothing to avert disaster. By the end, all lives have been broken and "not one of us", Dowell remarks, "has got what he really wanted".<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the narrator frequently comments in such a way as to suggest that he views his 'quartet' as emblem of a cosmic dislocation:

It is a queer and fantastic world. Why can't people have what they want? The things were all there to content everybody; yet everybody has the wrong thing. Perhaps you can make head or tail of it; it is beyond me.<sup>24</sup>

Through comments of this kind Dowell magnifies Edward and Nancy into creations of mythical scale, personifications of that passionate force which 'society', any society, will always crush in favour of the more adaptable Leonora. Such a scenario positively discourages anyone from building a frame of historical rationalisation and explication around the novel's emotional discords. Ford thus employed Dowell as the narrator of an anti-Darwinian nightmare of "broken, tumultuous, agonized, and unromantic lives, periods punctuated by screams, by imbecilities, by deaths, by agonies" intended as representative of the 'human condition'.<sup>25</sup> At length, strife and aspiration are stilled as silence descends over Branchaw, now inhabited by Dowell, a nurse and an aphasic Nancy. "So life peters out" Dowell elegises, for, in the words of another mythopoeist,

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper.<sup>26</sup>

The apocalypse of The Good Soldier's conclusion is silence.

The Good Soldier is, for our discomfort, a kind of natural disaster in which man's deepest, most passionate energies are depleted and finally discharged. It is not, Dowell seems to believe, a process that can be reversed by any human interference in the social fabric, for the decelerating rhythm of the novel has been placed outside of historical continuities. Thus to suggest timorously that Edward and Leonora might have managed their lives better had their education or class been different is to import into The Good Soldier a range of factors and cultural conditions that Ford's design renders impertinent. It is in this sense that Ford attempted to locate his novel in the context of a timeless myth; both his elaborate, hermetic form and Dowell's explicit comments support this purpose. What Ambrose Gorton called the "massive stasis" of The Good Soldier is indeed the quiescence of myth.<sup>27</sup>



And so, with the advantage conferred by two generations' retrospection, we can now place The Good Soldier within the modernist ambit of the beginning of the century. Ford's novel is another of those works composed as

aesthetic objects for contemplation, or [which] enact the leap out of time to the enduring artistic moment: the Joycean epiphany, the Imagist image, moments of stasis or aesthetic equipoise caught from the 'brutal chaos' of reality.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, Ford's prescriptive similes of the novel as a mosaic or helmet have a remarkable kinship with what another historian of this period has called the "strongly visualist" language of the modernist masters.<sup>29</sup> Indeed there is a good deal of evidence - over and above his acquaintance with T. E. Hulme, Worringer's English 'importer' - of Ford's intimacy with the major, radical developments in both art and literature in the years preceding The Good Soldier and at the time of its composition. It was appropriate that the opening of this novel should first have appeared in Wyndham Lewis' Blast. Furthermore, several of Ford's published comments on avant-garde art around 1914 suggest not only his familiarity with Epstein, Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska and Marinetti, but also that he was struggling towards some kind of insight into the non-naturalistic potential of his own chosen genre as a method for representing paralysis, public and private; an awareness that he could compose a novel constructed along similar lines to a cubist painting or Epstein's sculpture, "Rock Drill", as an image of bafflement. The point can only, finally, be inconclusive, yet surely suggestive is Ford's comment (in the post-war Thus to Revisit) that he had recognised in 1914 the Vorticists' and Cubists' attempt to express themselves "in abstract form or in abstract sound". The Good Soldier can be seen as a parallel endeavour by Ford in the more exacting medium of fiction, so refractory in its historicism.<sup>30</sup> In a similar tenor Ford was observing in May 1914 that the Futurist painters of that period



were doing very much what novelists of the type of Flaubert or...Maupassant aimed at. They gave you not so much the reconstitution of a crystallized scene in which all the figures were arrested - not so much that, as fragments of impressions gathered during a period of time, during a period of emotion, or...travel....<sup>31</sup>

...during, indeed the European and American travel that punctuates, perhaps generates, Dowell's narrative. Too much significance can be extracted from comments of this kind. Nevertheless it is difficult to gainsay the similarity between what Ford describes as a plastic technique of Futurist artists and the procedures of Dowell in the contemporaneous Good Soldier. Likewise, parallels can be found between the novel and the image of the 'vortex', printed in the same issue of Blat and bespeaking "whirling concentrations of energy" within a frame that was "stable and self-contained". In his book on the Vorticist movement Wees has specifically denied The Good Soldier a place within this school on account of its "chatty, Jamesian subtleties", but it can at least be argued that the novel's combination of poodourantism and hysteria, a rigid formal structure restraining anarchy and fission, is akin to the basic Vorticist tenet of "internal energy and external calm".<sup>32</sup> Both seem parabolic of the period's tension between a radical, non-conformist culture and the stanchions of political and cultural conservatism.

However, of all these various possible analogies between The Good Soldier and plastic art-forms the most productive may be the Cubist connection. (Frank Kermode must have been alluding to this when he referred, in passing and without naming The Good Soldier, to Ford's "Cubist novel".)<sup>33</sup> Wylie Sypher has been more specific, calling The Good Soldier a novel "about the unreliability of the modern self" and concluding that "technically the novel

is an exercise like Cubist painting, which treated its subjects by seeing them from contrary points of view simultaneously?<sup>34</sup> Dowell himself, Ford's "Man Without Qualities", writes in very similar vein about his principles of composition:

I have explained everything that went before it from the several points of view that were necessary - from Leonora's, from Edward's and, to some extent, from my own.<sup>35</sup>

Dowell, then, can be seen to be telling his story in a quasi-cubist manner, dissolving a space constructed from a fixed point of view and showing instead that the events in Germany and Hampshire exist in multiple relations to each other, changing their appearance according to the point-of-view from which we see them. In particular, those scenes in The Good Soldier which come to have the resonant significance of an 'epiphany' - the first assemblage of the quartet in the Nauheim restaurant, or the 'Lutheran' episode at Marburg - reverberate because they are told multi-dimensionally, with a driving narrative concern for the establishment of alternative modes of perception.

And yet Dowell too is a participant, however unwilling, in these events, and his comments indicate his sense that, like the Cubist, "his awareness of nature was part of nature". Similarly, post-Einstein physicists are cognizant of their own place in the environment they study: an 'Uncertainty Principle' was operating in The Good Soldier as in cubism and the new science.<sup>36</sup> And so, as cubism was a study in the techniques of representation, a new look at the relationship between art and reality which gave us the tableau-tableau, the painter's painting, so The Good Soldier was, as Scherer remarked, a novelist's novel and an investigation of "both the object and the means of painting this object".<sup>37</sup> The indisputable fact that most critical discussion of The Good Soldier has so far revolved, hotly and inconclusively, around the moral worth of Dowell, as if he were a Dickensian heroine, may perhaps lend

weight to Ford's intentions. Conceivably, he didn't intend us to be able to evaluate Dowell with the clarity and certainty with which we discuss Esther in Bleak House, or Katharine in The Fifth Queen or even Tietjens in Parade's End. Dowell, indeed, may not be discussable in similar terms; it is arguable that the frequent intemperance with which the debate around Dowell has been conducted has resulted from a failure to see that ambivalence and unreliability are the very constituents of Ford's particular design.<sup>38</sup>

In his examination of the interrelations between modernist literature and art Sypher took Cide as an example of the "Cubist novelist", that interesting oxymoron, and argued from his work that

irresolution, an incapacity or unwillingness to endorse any one perspective, was typical of the cubist temperament, the indecision of the early twentieth-century intellectual who, having accepted the notion of relativism, was aware of all the attitudes that could be held, but perhaps not acted upon: neutrality in art and life, and a clever investigation of alternative angles on every problem.<sup>39</sup>

Sypher's emphasis here on the linkage between art and the soil from which it grew is salutary, both in general and in the particular instance of The Good Soldier, for some critical treatment of the latter has limited itself to a rather hermetic view of the novel as being only a development of certain of the author's technical obsessions. The status of The Good Soldier is not diminished, is indeed confirmed, if it is established in its own milieu, England immediately before the war.

Both the novel's own formal structure and the authorial comments surrounding it have tended to deflect critical attention away from the connections between The Good Soldier and the period of its composition, yet the results of such an analysis may be enlightening and may provide still more confirmation of the novel's magnitude. The task of laying bare such correspondences is assuredly more difficult in the case of The Good Soldier than with, say, Galsworthy's The Man of Property (1906) or Tressell's The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists (1914) where one can discern a fairly obvious connection between fiction and an author's sensitivity to social forces. Even Howards End (1910), though more complex than either novel,

nonetheless offers the critic intent on such questions a reasonably firm footing. And yet, for all the thorniness of locating with any precision The Good Soldier's 'topicality', its temporal bearings, a reader will sense that the novel 'belongs to' 1915 as firmly as do Woolf's The Voyage Out or Lawrence's The Rainbow.

Such an intuition, vaguely expressed as a feeling that The Good Soldier somehow 'caught' the deepest mood of its own time, cannot be expressed as a function, as in the case of Tressell, of any polemical purpose. Ford didn't design The Good Soldier as a vehicle for communicating any clear-cut views of his own, though the novel's very lack of an intelligible 'ideology' may itself be a fact of crucial import. Although we are made aware of the existence of certain forces in convulsive action, Ford's personification of such social movements through the characters of Edward and Leonora militates against a reader's total identification with either. The evidence of our own mixed reactions to these two figures makes it impossible for us to believe that their creator was wholly either 'for' or 'against' the social alignments for which Edward and Leonora may be said to stand. And so although The Good Soldier follows, like What Maisie Knew, the pattern of a formal dance, perhaps the minuet to which Dowell referred, with Ford intending to imply "a freedom from time, change and contingency" common in "the iconography of modern art and literature", the novelist still remains faithful to the complexities that are built up within each of the dance's several 'movements' and that render precarious an absolute moral judgment. That is to say, Ford doesn't oversimplify the crowded entanglements that constitute any individual's life.<sup>40</sup> Thus he puts no pressure on us to believe that any single character in The Good Soldier offers a model of human behaviour. The absence from its pages of a 'Victorian' hero or villain only indicates, at the simplest level, that the novel was not conceived as a prescriptive

human document.

Even in The Spirit of the People, where Ford recorded as fact an anecdote which grew into one of The Good Soldier's most harrowing scenes, he was careful to represent the full complexities of his own reactions to what he witnessed. About the drive to the station by a tight-lipped husband in love with his ward he wrote, in 1907, that

a silence so utter, a so demonstrative lack of tenderness, seems to me to be a manifestation of a national characteristic that is almost  
41  
appalling.

Nevertheless this criticism is muted by The Spirit of the People's general admiration for the 'games' played by the English middle-class, in the same way as Dowell's local condemnation of individuals in The Good Soldier must be seen in the context of Ford's refusal to make an outright and sustained attack on anyone in that novel. Thus the very allusiveness and conditionality of the novel make it impossible to read The Good Soldier as simply an indictment of the leisured class, solely an attack on the excessive phlegm of the English bourgeoisie. More truthfully, these elements are but part of a complex, demanding work  
42  
that requires a more subtle dissection.

Any narrow reading of The Good Soldier's historical dimension, focussing on only one of the novel's perceptions, serves to diminish its rich diversity. The paradox of The Good Soldier, as of Wuthering Heights, is that a 'mythopoeic' fiction, despite its metaphysical and atemporal elements, can in fact open up more historical perspectives than a 'documentary' novel such as The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists. Thus Ambrose Gordon has felt it possible



to include The Good Soldier in a study of Ford's 'war-novels', alongside the post-war Parade's End and The Marsden Case. The Good Soldier is thus read as an anticipation, with civilian characters, of the horror and madness of the imminent war.<sup>43</sup> The novel's allusiveness and power of generalisation permit of a reading that stresses its 'prophetic' nature. Hoffmann, too, draws attention to The Good Soldier's historical analogues, linking the private and the public 'faces' of the novel, the fictional microcosm and the historical macrocosm. The collapse of domestic relationships in the novel and the breakdown in international affairs in 1914 are presented as cognate:

The macrocosm of a world at war is thus symbolically linked to the microcosm of the private world of the characters in crisis, and both are moving more and more rapidly toward catastrophe and the end of the world as they knew it.....The interlocking events which are the cause of Florence's and Edward's suicide and Nancy's madness are like the events that led to World War I-- each move caused a counter move because of the entangled embroilment of the nations and their alliances; each action of the characters caused a reaction in the others<sup>44</sup> because of their entangled lives.

Though probably completed before the War began, it is possible, then, to read the novel as a commentary on either the causes of the hostilities or on the bitterness and futility of the coming strife. A plausible case

can be made for The Good Soldier as a war novel without trenches or shells, such an interpretation taking as literal Dowell's metaphors of "the sack of a city or the falling to pieces of a people."<sup>45</sup>

Equally, though, the novel can be seen as an English, domestic tragedy, as Ford's "ultimate picture of the plight of contemporary upper class society", no less violent in its way than Arden of Feversham; as an elegiac account of the defeat of traditional, quasi-feudal virtues by "a strident individualism governed by expediency rather than principle"; a bitter, nostalgic vision of a world in which a sense of responsibility has been whittled down to a mere facade of respectability, leaving only "emotional and moral inertia and total meaninglessness".<sup>46</sup> It is a tribute to The Good Soldier's multipresence that both these readings, the narrowly-political 'international' as well as the national, socio-historic, can provide new insights into the novel's richness of reference. Both readings are, however, vulnerable to the charge of having made The Good Soldier a more conclusive, affirmative novel than it appears during our experience of reading it.

Some of the novel's willed inconclusiveness can be suggested by placing it alongside Henry James' remark, in a letter written at the outbreak of war, that the conflagration effectively forced an individual to rewrite his own recent history in a process that was as painful as it was unavoidable:

The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness...is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the

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while really making for and meaning  
is too tragic for any words.<sup>47</sup>

The tragic contradiction here is generated by what is only implicit; it was the widespread confidence that the "treacherous years" were ushering in a better world, the common optimism towards the future, that made their meaning as a prologue to the war so darkly disturbing; these years were the Sirens, luring Europe to its mass-grave with their golden cadences. Dowell too is found meditating on a similar paradox, "too tragic for any words", between ostensible security and actual disharmony, at the opening of The Good Soldier:

The mob may sack Versailles; the Trianon may fall, but surely the minuet--the minuet itself is dancing itself away into the furthest stars, even as our minuet of the Hessian bathing places must be stepping itself still. Isn't there any heaven where old beautiful dances, old beautiful

intimacies prolong themselves? Isn't there any Nirvana pervaded by the faint thrilling of instruments that have fallen into the dust of wormwood but that yet had frail, tremulous, and everlasting souls?

No, by God, it is false! It wasn't a minstrel that we stepped; it was a prison - a prison full of screaming hysterics, tied down so that they might not outsound the rolling of our carriage wheels as we went along the shaded avenues of the Taunus Wald.

And yet I swear by the sacred name of my creator that it was true. It was true sunshine; the true music; the true splash of the fountains from the mouth of stone dolphins. For, if for me we were four people with the same tastes, with the same desires, acting - or, no, not acting - sitting here and there unanimously, isn't that the truth? If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple? So it may well be with Edward Ashburnham, with Leonora his wife and with poor dear Florence. And, if you come to think of it, isn't it a little odd that the physical rottenness of at least two pillars of our four-square house never presented itself to my mind as a menace to its security? It doesn't so present itself now though the two of them are actually dead. I don't know...

I know nothing - nothing in the world - of the hearts of men. I only knew that I am alone - horribly alone. <sup>48</sup>

The wracked anguish of James' brief comment is here given full narrative treatment in Dowell's rumination. The painful strain that is merely implicit in James is marked in Ford by the violence with which Dowell oscillates between the two possible mental states ("He, by God, it is false! .... And yet I swear by the sacred name of my creator that it was true.") Just as James looked back from the war-torn present to a past that had been characterised by a widespread confidence, so here Dowell, from the vantage-point of 1914 when both Florence and Edward are already dead, is casting his mind over the "treacherous years" that intervened from 1904. Burdened with their present knowledge, neither James nor Dowell can believe fully either in the malignity or in the edenic nature of the period before the holocaust. For both men, this pre-lapsarian epoch now has both a vivid reality and a fabled, gossamery thinness. Moreover, it is precisely this tension that is sustained throughout The Good Soldier, so that Dowell's meditation in the opening chapter merits full quotation because it comes to possess representative status as a theme to be repeated in different keys all through the novel. A gentle, idealising nostalgia is counterpointed with a sociological rejection of illusion, both moods ending in silence. James noted that the dialectic of fidelity and scepticism was ultimately "too tragic for any words". Similarly, the final point of rest in The Good Soldier is Dowell's decision not to reply to Edward's valediction because "Sa/Allen't know what to say".

The rhythms, even the precise images of this passage, thus stretch outwards to the edges of The Good Soldier and, beyond, to the society which is refracted in the pages of the novel. Thus what Spender, following Conrad, called "the destructive element"—modernist writers' "experience of all-pervading Present, which is a world without belief", a void from which artists either look back or peer forwards—is shown in this passage to be a commingling of an enervated idealism and an abrasive demand for all human fallibilities to be laid bare by the exposing light of truth. (In much the same way, Lord Jim, which gave birth to the seminal phrase, swings between



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an unavailing romanticism and suicidal cases of self-knowledge.) Dowell's delineation of his heaven, replete with its unceasing minuet, "the faint thrilling of instruments that have fallen into the dust of wormwood" and "the...splash of the fountains from the mouth of stone dolphins", seems almost emblematic of the 'Georgian' imagination, echoic of much of that period's verse and the early fantasies of E.M. Forster. Into this idyll bursts a rough, post-Freudian voice proclaiming the reality of the horrors suppressed; the more violent, less urbane tone that Hughes has found 50 characteristic of European social thought in the decade before the War. Neither of these two 'voices' succeeds in establishing a dominant role in The Good Soldier. Ford maintains a precarious balance between the elegance of the old traditions and the murky depths revealed by a later, clamant knowledge. The "years" are rendered with their full "treachery" and their full allure.

Ford, then, will permit nothing more positive to emerge from this passage, or from the whole of the novel, than the irreducible, ignorant solitariness of his narrator:

I know nothing—nothing in the world—of the hearts  
of men. I only know that I am alone—horribly alone.

Only doubt is irrefutable in The Good Soldier: a linguistic uncertainty as to the exact meaning of "a rotten apple" long considered unbruised, which, radiating outwards to the circumference of the novel, even comes to inform the problematical nature of human character. Semantic, moral and political realities are all uncertain in the world of The Good Soldier, where only the narrator's agnosticism is beyond question. For this reason, any 'historical' criticism of the novel must acknowledge, even if it cannot endorse, The Good Soldier's rejection of positivism. At the heart of the novel lies the only belief to which Ford had consistently adhered since his earlier disillusionment with the Conservative Party—his gospel of the vanity of all human dogmas.

In the concluding pages of The Good Soldier Dowell ruminates on the 'ideological' implications of his story, wondering what place his narrative will occupy in that wider debate about the sexual and economic role of women to which the final novels of Hardy and the life and art of Wells had contributed.<sup>51</sup> "Modern Love" indeed might well have been chosen as a subtitle for The Good Soldier, which offers a series of scenes of triangular embroilments and erotic misadventures in a variety of tones: from the high comedy of the arranged marriage between two naive virgins of the same caste, Leonora and Edward, through the latter's affairs and the worldly machinations of Florence with her arriviste blackmailer, to, finally, the platonic volcano of Nancy and Ashburnham. All the central characters of The Good Soldier are permitted to speculate about the nature of marriage, but none is really revolutionary and Dowell's summary of the debate could hardly be expected to disturb any male complacencies:

Kind, I am not preaching anything contrary to accepted morality. I am not advocating free love in this or any other case. Society must go on, I suppose, and society can only exist if the normal, if the virtuous, and the slightly deceitful flourish, and if the passionate, the headstrong, and the too-truthful are condemned to suicide and to madness...

Yes, society must go on; it must breed, like rabbits.

That is what we are here for. But then, I don't like society -  
much.<sup>52</sup>

The timid irony of this passage indicates why, for all the many adulteries in its pages and the quasi-incestuous love of Edward for Nancy, The Good Soldier ran little risk of being burned by a bishop, like Hardy's Jude, or

indeed of inciting that outraged hate which greeted The Rainbow or Ann Veronica. Like so much English fiction before 1914 - Forster's 'Sawston' novels or his Howards End: the early tales and novels of Lawrence - The Good Soldier depicts a conflict between received conventions and urgent passionate drives. Authenticity was being privatised. And yet, despite its criticism of certain bourgeois values, Ford's novel is far from being a revolutionary treatment of 'family life'. The dissenting, romantic assumption behind The Good Soldier - that a man, Ashburnham, can die of love - is fundamentally questioned by the casualness with which Dowell alludes, almost as an after-thought, to Edward's suicide, and, more widely, by the novel's 'cubist' variety of perspectives, by its "irresolvable pluralism of truths".<sup>53</sup> Ford indeed brought the vertical conflict between public and private senses of reality into sharp focus, but he didn't attempt to resolve the dichotomy of individual conscience and social convention.<sup>54</sup> The final, climactic episode of The Good Soldier, with Leonora and Nancy "like judges debating over the sentence upon a criminal;...like ghouls with an immobile corpse in a tomb beside them" has been described as "Gothic" in mood.<sup>55</sup> Yet Ford so manipulates his novel that, through Dowell, the pent-up power of this climax is succeeded by an atrophied, bewildered silence for which the Gothic tale provided no equivalent.<sup>56</sup>

The difficulty in trying to put into words one's reaction to the conclusion of The Good Soldier is that almost every formulation comes to seem too definite, too sharply-sixed. Earlier attempts to encapsulate this mood - phrases such as "the grim dignity of resignation" or the novel's "stoicism" - appear slightly too severe in ascribing to the finale a saving power of endurance. This was not Ford's 'Roman novel'.<sup>57</sup> Another reader attempting to pinpoint the novel's suffusing mood has likened The Good Soldier to the Absurd theatre of Beckett and Ionesco.<sup>58</sup> And although this

comparison is plainly anachronistic, there is surely a sense in which Ford shared certain elements with today's 'minimalist' artists:

I am Dowall wrote that absurd figure, an American millionaire, who has bought one of the ancient haunts of English peace. I sit here, in Edward's gun-room, all day and all day in a house that is absolutely quiet. No one visits me, for I visit no one. No one is interested in me, for I have no interests. In twenty minutes or so I shall walk down to the village, beneath my own oaks, alongside my own clumps of gorse, to get the American mail. My tenants, the village boys and the tradesmen will touch their hats to me. So life peters out. I shall return to dine and Nancy will sit opposite me with the old nurse standing behind her. Enigmatic, silent, utterly well-behaved as far as her knife and fork go, Nancy will stare in front of her with the blue eyes that have over them strained, stretched brows. Once, or perhaps twice, during the meal her knife and fork will be suspended in mid-air as if she were trying to think of something that she had forgotten. Then she will say that she believes in an Omnipotent Deity or she will utter the one word 'shuttlecocks', perhaps. It is very extraordinary to see the perfect flush of health on her cheeks, to see the lustre of her coiled black hair, the poise of the head upon the neck, the grace of the white hands - and to think that it all means nothing - that it is a picture without a meaning. Yes, it is queer.<sup>59</sup>

Precisely: "a picture without a meaning". And a remarkable, resonant paragraph inasmuch as all the articles of the Ashburnham code - that is, the

peace ascribed to the possession of a large, isolated mansion; the sacred associations of land-owning; the mysticism of a received social respect; the elegance of near-perfect etiquette; religious and sporting fidelities; the poise of a beautiful chastity - every single item of the "good people's" creed is here evacuated of meaning, drained of vitality in the inertia of insanity. This 'interior' builds up a haunting permanence in the memory. Like the mad Duchemin breakfast in Parade's End, it stands as a monument to an exhausted social class, pathetic as the wrinkled sepia photograph of a dead beauty.

Dowell's tenancy of Branshaw with the vacuous Nancy is indeed a prophetic anticipation of a later Endgame, is quite literally Fin de Partie, and the girl's belief in God bears some resemblance to the attendance of Vladimir and Estragon upon the ever-absent Godot. And yet, for all the superficial modernity of The Good Soldier's overarching sadness, which indeed "arises from perpetual despair at the realization of this human predicament [and which is] a total and helpless despair", Ford's novel cannot approach the universal reference of Beckett's Godot.<sup>60</sup>

Didi and Cogo can be seen without strain as twin versions of a modern Everyman, ubiquitous and capable of infinite mutations in an infinity of circumstances. Ford's 'stage' too is desolate and empty but, crucially, it has the specificity of fiction. Dowell and Nancy are individuals with a known history that would stubbornly resist translation into endless other locales; Branshaw has been located with some precision in southern England; and we know, with fair assurance, the date of the happenings ascribed.<sup>61</sup> All in all, then, The Good Soldier is "rich in precise if not actual details of life, organized



into an imagined whole that has a remarkable inner consistency".<sup>62</sup>

Fiction's obstinate rootedness here works against a mythical universality.

Lazitude, then, rather than an upright confrontation with suffering, is surely the keynote of the novel's final chapters, and Dowell's collapse into muteness allows Ford to sidestep any resolution of the conflict built up between the individual and surrounding public codes. We are told that "a full eighteen months" have elapsed before Dowell writes the novel's epilogue, and at the beginning of this postscript the narrator emphasizes that above all else, beyond the romantic or the stoical, his story is a record of human exhaustion:

For, I daresay, all this may sound romantic, but it is tiring. tiring. tiring to have been in the midst of it; to have taken the tickets; to have caught the trains; to have chosen the cabins; to have consulted the purser and the stewards as to diet for the quiescent patient [Nancy] who did nothing but announce her belief in an Omnipotent Deity. That may sound romantic - but it is just a record of fatigue.<sup>63</sup>

Dowell is still, by his own evidence, less than fifty years old, but the months following his departure as a widower for America in September 1913 have preternaturally aged him.<sup>64</sup> "I don't know. I know nothing. I am very tired", Dowell admits at one point, and elsewhere says:

Of course you have the makings of a situation here, but it is all very humdrum, as far as I am concerned. I should marry Nancy if her reason were ever sufficiently restored to let her appreciate the meaning of the Anglican marriage service. But it is probable that her reason will never be sufficiently restored to let her appreciate the meaning of the Anglican marriage service. Therefore I cannot marry her, according to the law of the land.<sup>65</sup>

Ford, infrequently praised for the verisimilitude of his fictional speech, has here recorded with a painful accuracy the repetitive deliberateness in thought and expression of a man who has reached the edge of human endurance.

Dowell's final senility, his weary inability to make any moral judgment was a happy means of avoiding resolution of all the social, sexual and political problems Ford knew to exist in pre-war England and recorded fully in his fiction and essays of this period.<sup>66</sup> Neither the perplexity of the narrator nor the fundamental ahistoricism of the novel's structure encourages us to expect any conclusive response to the cultural problems raised. The "semiosis" of The Good Soldier doesn't permit "answers that have more than a degree of probability" and certainly no "answers that carry certitude".<sup>67</sup> Ford's preoccupation with the limits of omniscient narrative - and Dowell is, by the end, as divinely knowledgeable as any Victorian tale-teller - precludes the possibility of The Good Soldier's being employed as a revolutionary, or even a reformist vehicle. For all his achieved understanding and his sensitivity - and Dowell was sufficiently alert to capture and record Leonora's momentary hesitation before she sat down in the Mannheim restaurant - he is incapable of rendering a coherent review of the history of his circle, or of so ordering events as to generate an inclusive moral significance.<sup>68</sup> Ford has created a world whose only certainty is the lack of a moral architecture. Implicit in such nihilism is the futility of attempting to change a world which cannot even be understood.

The "drive to neutrality" that characterizes The Good Soldier, by means of which a limited criticism of conventional social arrangements and assumptions is subsumed by a formal structure antipathetic to change, was patently useful to a novelist publicly critical of some bourgeois values but unable to discover a viable alternative.<sup>69</sup> There is a wealth of evidence to confirm that such was indeed Ford's dilemma just before the war and The Good Soldier

is recognisable as an "objective correlative" of its author's condition.<sup>70</sup> Yet the social paralysis of which this novel provides such a compelling picture was not confined merely to Ford, was not simply a consequence of his own marital and political entanglements. On the contrary, the evidence from the history and art of the early twentieth-century suggests rather that Ford had given expression to a moral disablement common among the European bourgeoisie before 1914. The Good Soldier is a novel of such resonance that it is not inappropriate to liken it, in miniature, to Marcel Proust's great cycle. If Proust was "the last great historian of the loves, the society, the intelligence, the diplomacy, the literature and the art of the Heartbreak House of capitalist culture", then The Good Soldier assuredly provided an English footnote to this European chronicle.<sup>71</sup> The elegant vacuity; "the strange loss of knowledge...in the area of personal relationships", which co-existed with a sudden growth in the physical and psychological sciences; the deft hypocrisy of a world in which, at international level, rulers sold nations with Goethe on their lips or deals were clinched with tags from Schiller: all this was rendered with remarkable insight in The Good Soldier as Ford, an outsider like Proust, sought to comprehend the alien code of Ashburnham or Branshaw.<sup>72</sup> Most remarkable of all perhaps is his picture of the experience of living in a highly-formalised, ritual-based society which, on the basis of its parasitic privileges, attempted to exclude the outside world, the world in which "there was such a thing as a dollar and....a dollar can be extremely desirable if you don't happen to possess one".<sup>73</sup> Ford's is a remarkable portrait of a class which tried to establish a hermetic existence. Even time itself, a sense of chronological flow, is marginal to The Good Soldier as Dowell compresses time past and time present into the timeless world of a memory juggling with the calendar. A life abstracted from time is all that a formal society, lacking the historical imagination,

can possibly conceive.<sup>74</sup> The moral ambivalence with which this class and this period have been rendered, far from marring the novel, only served to confirm the historical verisimilitude of Ford's delineation of a perceptual and moral sightlessness characteristic of its time. The Good Soldier presents the world-vision of a class faltering through an epoch of social convulsion.<sup>75</sup>

Ford's novel, then, discloses a vital, fruitful tension between a modernist, essentially ahistorical scenario and fiction's traditional energetic concern with the specificities of time and place. While seeking to generalise about the limitations of epistemology, The Good Soldier is, unlike Godot, ballasted by its own precise particularity. Thus while being effective as "a version of the ways in which a man can know reality", it cannot avoid being concurrently "a version of reality itself".<sup>76</sup> Frank Kermode has drawn attention to the danger of modernist art retreating "into some paradigm, into a timeless and unreal vacuum from which all reality had been pumped" and has argued that Ulysses avoided this fate because it "studies and develops the tension between paradigm and reality, asserts the resistance of fact to fiction, human freedom and unpredictability against plot".<sup>77</sup> The great mythical superstructure of Ulysses, that mesh of Homeric parallels, is grounded upon the novelist's customary interest in the dynamics of the family and the entrancing mundanities of urban life. Similarly the paradigmatic elements in The Good Soldier are countermined by another, realistic force: the English novelist's time-honoured interest in the relationship between land and money.

Writing about the 'Country-House Novel', Raymond Williams has remarked that these houses in fiction "are places where events prepared elsewhere, continued elsewhere, transiently and intricately occur" and has argued that their strange irrelevance, their isolation from the main currents of life, is a reflection of the determining economic dimension having shifted from land to money.<sup>78</sup> Williams' comment has some broad relevance to The Good Soldier, in which almost the only deed of any moment Ashburnham is shown to commit in his own house is his self-destruction. Indeed his tragedy can be summarised as his inability to spend all his energies upon the administration of his

estate, for while his seignoral values are based on land his wife's more potent energies are cash-centred. As a Philadelphian property-owner, Dowell possesses both and is fascinated by both: he relishes alike Edward's traditional loyalties to his tenants and Leonora's pertinacity in salvaging the family fortune by mortgage, sale and rent.<sup>79</sup> The conflict between these two bourgeois codes is fundamental to The Good Soldier, as it was in English history between 1890 and 1914.<sup>80</sup>

Ford, it is clear, shared with his predecessors, with Defoe, Austen and Dickens, a normal curiosity about money; not the interest of Balzac and Bennett in how money was made but rather in its role as a social lubricant, or abrasive. Throughout his career, from Mr. Flaubert through Parade's End to Henry for Hugh in the 'thirties, Ford was alive to the difference that the possession of wealth made to a man's self-perception and to the way he was seen by others. And so, for all Ford's ambition to create a novel as hard in texture as a brassen casque, he couldn't abandon this materialist preoccupation. Dowell may be a halting judge of ethics but as narrator Ford has endowed him with a journalist's concern for the exact details of financial transactions. "The intricate tangle of references and cross-references" to which Ford later referred with some pride may be taken to allude to the engrossing chronology of The Good Soldier, but it is equally true of that nexus of financial, political, social, emotional, religious and class attitudes that underpins it.<sup>81</sup> Thus it is no coincidence that Edward Ashburnham owns an estate with an income of some £5000 a year; that he is a Tory, who addresses two public meetings in the month of his death, and whose involvement in the celebrated 'Kilayte Case' is exploited by his Liberal enemies; that he feels a deep responsibility towards tenant-farmers "who've been earning money for him for centuries"; that he is a sentimentalist, requiring loyalty and admiration from his mistresses; or that



he kills himself because Nancy no longer seems to be offering these oblations and also because his wife threatens to confiscate his cheque-book.<sup>82</sup> The point is that The Good Soldier is both a technical tour de force and, moreover, a novel which places actions such as Edward's suicide within a full context of human behaviour.

Central to The Good Soldier is Dowell's hampered attempt to understand the marriage between Edward and Leonora. From the first paragraph, introducing us to "the depths of an English heart", to the concluding comment about "English good form", it is this Ashburnham match that Dowell tries to comprehend. All else, the numerous 'triangles' from the early 'Kilgyle Case' down to the involvement with Nancy Rufford, exists only for the light cast upon this central preoccupation. Furthermore Dowell is almost always informative about the material foundations of this marriage. (Another symptom of his senility in the last two chapters is his sudden failure to supply us with the economic implications of Edward's death.) In the bulk of the novel Ford, through Dowell, is as forthcoming about the Ashburnhams' material circumstances as is Defoe in Moll Flanders. Hence we are told of Leonora's upbringing in an indigent family of Anglo-Irish settler farmers and of his tenants' detestation of Col. Poyne precisely because Leonora's assumptions - of the need to economise and of the landlord's lack of responsibility to his tenants - vitally affect her later marriage to Edward and the course of their lives. Indeed, after their arranged marriage, their first quarrel had economic, not amatory roots. In the agricultural depression of the 'nineties Edward, following the traditions of his forebears, reduced rents in order to tide his tenants over a bad period; whereas Leonora, with her different economic and class principles, wanted to squeeze every penny out of Mansford and the rest of her husband's tenants. Dowell shows us Edward beginning to see, long before any sexual estrangement between them,

that "whereas his own traditions were entirely collective, his wife was a sheer individualist". While Edward, in the epoch of monopoly capitalism when land was no longer so productive, remained faithful to his ancestral codes, Leonora was constantly looking forward to the material health of her unborn children and of the Branshaw estate. Edward was motivated by "exploded traditions", Leonora by potential dividends.<sup>83</sup>

As the years go by, Dowell makes us understand how Edward's later affairs were all only symptoms of this underlying incompatibility between the 'feudal' husband and his wife. He explains why, after the economic disasters of the Dolciquita case in 1895, Leonora felt obliged to claim trusteeship of Branshaw, and Dowell is as precise about the details of Leonora's jobbery, selling Vandyke portraits and letting the house, as he is clear about the effects of these actions on Edward: "and there was an end of Edward as the good landlord and father of his people."<sup>84</sup> In passages like this, Dowell allows us to reconstruct the economic determinants of Edward's suicide. With information he supplies we can discover the full context of the Ashburnham marriage and place it within a coherent social totality.

Nevertheless one is obliged to speak of the 'reconstruction' and 'discovery' of these socio-economic forces because, through Dowell, Ford has broken down the history of the Ashburnhams between 1893 and 1914 into a series of discontinuous fragments. By contrast, Tolstoy narrated the career of Levin, whose life has suggestive similarities with Edward's, in a fashion which made obvious the causal connections between his activity as a large, pre-revolutionary landowner and his religious and emotional growth. The <sup>classical realist novel</sup> ~~reconstruction~~ took for granted the existence of an explicable social fabric. With The Good Soldier, on the other hand, an exegetic effort is required, since Ford, despite his alien's interest in issues of money and

class, is unwilling to accept the full implications of this concern. Had Ford patterned his story like the biography or the historical record, it would have been difficult to avoid the conclusion that Edward's death was, at least in part, socially determined.<sup>85</sup> Thus the rearrangement of Dowell's fragments into a coherent, chronological narrative might have implied the necessity for a reconstruction of society which neither Ford, in 1915, nor that class about which he wrote, was able to accept. Dowell's early admission of the unproductiveness of his circle

But upon my word, I don't know how we put in our time.

How does one put in one's time? How is it possible to have achieved /sic/ nine years and to have nothing whatever to show for it? Nothing whatever, you understand. Not so much as a bone penholder, carved to resemble a chessman and with a hole in the top through which you could see four views of Naubein. And, as for experience, as for knowledge of one's fellow beings - nothing either,<sup>86</sup>

a confession which appeared at a time when "productivity" was being demanded to defeat a national enemy, was mediated and diluted by a distancing formal structure. Such, in Ford's novel, was the animated tension between "paradigm" and "reality"; between, in the society about which he wrote, the reality of distorting inequities and the desire to immortalize the existent structures.

The above analysis of The Good Soldier brings to the surface a particularly interesting feature of modernist literature: the intricate relationship, within the novels of Joyce, Woolf and Richardson, between an atemporal formal impulse and fiction's usual contingencies with a raw material ceaselessly in motion.<sup>87</sup> Connected, and of equal interest, is the light The Good Soldier throws, by its rare shapeliness, on the broad critical debate between 'life' and 'art'.

Where, then, does The Good Soldier stand on such a 'scale'? Does the novel exhibit, in Trilling's phrase, those "clear and effective relations with reality" demanded from fiction by critical supporters of the school of 'life'?<sup>88</sup> Is it perhaps merely a feat of arid technological brilliance?

Certainly notes of dissent have regularly been struck, from 1915 to the present. There have always been readers for whom The Good Soldier is disqualified by its lack of what Henry James called "felt life".<sup>89</sup> Among such deprecatory comments the most interesting early example was Theodore Dreiser's New Republic notice in June 1915 where the American novelist criticised The Good Soldier because, reading it, "You are never really stirred. You are never hurt. You are merely told and referred. It is all cold narrative, never truly poignant."<sup>90</sup> To Dreiser, the novel was a tale of missed opportunities, "a great theme marred by [Ford's] sniffy reverence for conventionalism and the glories of a fixed [social] condition", "fairly representative of that encrusting formalism which, barnacle-wise, is apparently overtaking and destroying all that is best in English life".<sup>91</sup> Writing at a moment of particular historical crisis - America was to enter the war in April 1917 - Dreiser mistakes Ford's record of a society for an apology. He assumes that Ford fully endorsed a conservative conventionalism.

The Good Soldier ~~avoids~~, indeed, <sup>instead</sup> register an unambiguous authorial condemnation. <sup>it</sup> performs the more difficult task of making us aware why, at a particular time and for a particular group, moral certainty was felt to be inoperative. The absence from The Good Soldier of a clear moral resolution has been, in amplification of Dreiser's commentary, the burden of later critical views. Throughout, the implication has been that Ford lacked a vital sympathy for his characters' troubles; that he had devised a "devastating game of badminton" solely from delight at the technical potentiality of the "game". 'Life' exists in The Good Soldier only for 'art' to work on, in a constant process of rearrangement and impoverishment.<sup>82</sup> (This particular controversy had, like so many others, already been discussed by James; of special interest here is his Preface to What Maisie Knew.)

More than one of the questions about The Good Soldier's status as a modernist masterpiece reveal an overt political disagreement between novelist and critic. (Dreiser's review, for example, makes patent his disaffection for the class about which Ford wrote.) It is, therefore, of considerable interest that one of Ford's warmest defenders should have been Granville Hicks, author of a Marxian history of American literature, The Great Tradition (1933), and one of the best-known 'progressive' critics of the 'thirties. In an article on Ford in 1930 Hicks addressed himself to the same problem that had earlier exercised Dreiser - The Good Soldier's alleged inhumanity; yet Hicks reached very different conclusions:

There was justice in calling it 'the finest French novel in the English language'. With all its technical virtuosity, however, The Good Soldier is not merely a 'tour de force'. There is no disproportion between the technical skill and the solidity of the work. As a revelation of life the book

is worthy of the technique, and every formal subtlety adds to the accuracy and force of that revelation. With the utmost tenderness Ford pushes deeper and deeper into the minds of his characters, disclosing realms of passion and agony and meanness. Conrad never attempted to present so complex a situation, and James never ventured to explore emotion so intense and volcanic. When the book reaches its terrifying close, one realizes that only such formal perfection as Ford exhibits could bear the weight of this tragedy.<sup>93</sup>

Hicks' essay is of value because it indicates so clearly that around The Good Soldier there need be no conflict between values of "perfection" and "life".<sup>94</sup> As Hicks argues,

the choice is unnecessary. Ford's work not only shows that formal excellence may be combined with vitality and vigor; it reminds us that the sole justification of formal excellence is its effect in enhancing the vitality of the work in question.<sup>95</sup>

"Vitality" and "vigor" may seem odd words to describe a novel about suicides recorded by an enervated, inert narrator. Yet what is being demonstrated is the moral and artistic energy implicit not in the character of Dowell but in Ford's invention and deployment of that character. Dowell is captivated on his own perplexity, yet Ford's shaping and patterning of his narrator's introspection asserts the continuance of life. That "ideal of form" to which The Good Soldier stretches doesn't here deny life; rather is the "variousness of reality" warranted by the deft choreography of the author.<sup>96</sup> Had Ford himself been as torpid as Dowell or as nonchalant as Ashburnham, The Good Soldier wouldn't have been created. The existence of such a coherent portrait of incoherence is evidence of its author's lively



scepticism even about his own scepticism between 1913 and 1915. "Don't in any region of thought let any single accepted idea be your final end" Ford had urged a friend in 1913, and The Good Soldier is proof of his willingness to look beyond despair.<sup>97</sup> In the matrix of this fiction Ford discovered a way of so fashioning sadness that the crystalline order of that rendering only accentuated its poignancy.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 GS, I, i, p. 18. On the possible connections between GS and Ford's life, see Thomas C. Moser, "Conrad, Marwood and Ford: Biographical Speculations on the Genesis of The Good Soldier," Mosaic, VIII, 1 (Fall 1974), 217/27. Moser argues that "it is fairly obvious...that connections between The Good Soldier and the Hueffers, Marwoods, and Conrad are implicit throughout the novel." See also Moser's "From Olive Garnett's Diary: Impressions of Ford Madox Ford and his Friends, 1890-1906," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, XVI, iii (Fall 1974), 511/34.
- 2 GS, I, i, p. 18.
- 3 Claud Cockburn, "Carry on Fighting," Observer Magazine (November 28, 1971), 35/40.
- 4 Joyce Crick, The Listener, 2297 (April 5, 1973), 444/6. On the intricate verbal harmonies of GS, see R. Siemens, "The Juxtaposition of Composed Renderings in Ford's The Good Soldier," Humanities Association Bulletin, XVIII, iii (Summer 1972), 44/9.
- 5 Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership (London, 1948), p. 97.
- 6 Robert J. Soally, The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition (Princeton, 1975), pp. 126/7.
- 7 Richard Shannon, The Crisis of Imperialism 1865/1915 (London, 1974), pp. 276/7.
- 8 Ibid, p. 269.
- 9 "Literary Portraits—XX: Mr Gilbert Cannan and 'Old Mole'," Outlook, XXXII (January 24, 1914), 110/1, cited in Harvey, p. 183.
- 10 Ibid, cit. The simile of the helmet may perhaps echo T.E. Hulme's metaphorical reference to a suit of armour in his "Humanism and the Religious Attitude": Speculations, ed. Read, p. 19. There are indeed several passages in Hulme's writings which emphasise the close connections between GS and his aesthetic theories. Hulme, too, like Ford, had announced that he could write nothing of value before his fortieth birthday, and it was on this day that Ford claims to have begun GS: Further Speculations, ed. Hynes, p. xi; cp. fn. 44 below. Hulme's comment in 1909 that "We envisage the flux in certain static geometric shapes entirely for practical purposes, which have no ultimate reality at all" is akin to Ford's prescription for the novel in January 1914: Further Speculations, p. 5. Hulme enlarged on these ideas for a geometrical, abstract art in his article on "Modern Art", published in the following month, February 1914: Ibid, pp. 119 et seq.
- 11 GS, I, ii, p. 22.
- 12 Stuart Hampshire, "Joyce and Vico: The Middle Way," New York Review of Books, XX, xvi (October 18, 1973), 8/21.
- 13 GS, I, ii, p. 22.
- 14 GS, IV, i, p. 161; IV, iii, p. 192.
- 15 GS, I, i, p. 17.
- 16 Mark Schorer, "The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion," The World We Imagine (London, 1969), pp. 97/104.
- 17 Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," Sewanee Review, LIII, ii (Spring 1945), 221/40; LIII, iii (Summer 1945), 433/56; LIII, iv (Autumn 1945), 643/53. My argument in the following pages is heavily indebted to Frank's formulations. His seminal essay was countered in Walter Sutton, "The Literary Image and the Reader," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XVI, i (1957/8), 112/23. Sutton there argued for the importance of the time-factor as a vital determinant of literary form.

- 18 Frank, op. cit., 231 (emphasis added).  
 19 GS, I, IV, p. 48.  
 20 Frank, op. cit., 653.  
 21 Loc. cit.  
 22 GS, III, v, p. 146.  
 23 GS, IV, v, p. 204.  
 24 Loc. cit.  
 25 GS, IV, v, p. 205.  
 26 GS, IV, vi, p. 218; T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men".  
 27 Ambrose Gordon, Jr., The Invisible Tent: The War Novels of Ford Madox Ford (Texas, 1964), p. 55. Gordon commented, similarly, that of all the novels that come to mind The Good Soldier is the one that least moves ahead.  
 28 Malcolm Bradbury, The Social Context of Modern English Literature (Oxford, 1971), pp. 104/5.  
 29 Bernard Bergsoni, "Thoughts on the Personality Explosion," Innovations (London, 1968), p. 186. It is revealing here to note the number of critics who write of GS in plastic and "visualist" metaphors. Thus Walter Allen, after noting that "judged as a technical feat alone The Good Soldier is dazzling, as near perfection as a novel can be", went on to describe it as a "kaleidoscope", revealing new aspects with each chapter: The English Novel (Harmondsworth, 1958), p. 329. Similarly Melmer likened GS to "a relentless spiral" (Melmer, p. 151); Schorer to "a hall of mirrors" (op. cit., p. 98); and Wiley wrote that GS was "in great measure, an intellectual construct in a literary mathematics demanding the reader's complete mental engagement" (Wiley, p. 78).  
 30 IR, p. 174. Op. Wiley, p. 173: "an almost pure exercise in language".  
 31 "Literary Portraits - XXXVI: Les Jeunes and 'Des Imagistes,'" Outlook, XXXIII (May 16, 1914), 682/3 (emphasis added), cited in Harvey, p. 189.  
 32 William O. Wess, Verticism and the English Avant-Garde (Manchester, 1972), pp. 177, 190, 191.  
 33 The Sense of an Ending (New York, 1967), p. 123.  
 34 Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art (New York, 1962), pp. 62, 62/3. I am also indebted at this point to Sypher's Reconcile to Cubism in Art and Literature (New York, 1960), and to John Berger, "The Moment of Cubism," Selected Essays and Articles (Harmondsworth, 1972). See also, Ernst Fischer, Art Against Ideology (London, 1969), pp. 152/3.  
 35 GS, IV, 1, p. 161.  
 36 Berger, op. cit., p. 150. Op. Sypher, Reconcile to Cubism, p. 268: "The cubist object is a point at which thought about the object (our conception of it) penetrates and records sense impressions and feelings."  
 37 Schorer, op. cit., p. 104; Sypher, Reconcile to Cubism, p. 269.

- 38 The debate has been conveniently summarised in Joseph Weisenfarth, "Criticism and the Semiosis of The Good Soldier," Modern Fiction Studies, IX, 1 (Spring 1963), 39/49. Other important, later contributions are: Misener, ch. xx; Grover Smith, Ford Madox Ford (New York, 1972), pp. 27/34; Sondra J. Stang, "A Reading of Ford's The Good Soldier," Modern Language Quarterly, XXX, iv (December 1969), 545/63; Duncan Aswell, "The Saddest Storyteller in Ford's The Good Soldier," College Language Association Journal, XIV, 11 (December 1970), 187/96; Jo-Ann Baerstein, "Image, Identity and Insight in The Good Soldier," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, IX, 1 (1966), 19/42; Vern B. Lents, "Ford's Good Narrator," Studies in the Novel, V, iv (Winter 1973), 483/90.
- 39 Sypher, Rosocco to Cubism, p. 306. Joseph Frank neglected to consider why modernist artists should wish to flee history's time-world.
- 40 Bernard Bergsoni, The Situation of the Novel (London, 1970), p. 132. On the dance analogy see further, Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel (London, 1932), p. 26.
- 41 SP, pp. 150/1.
- 42 Geoffrey Wagner, "Ford Madox Ford: The Honest Edwardian," Essays in Criticism, XVII (January 1967), 75/88. Wagner demanded "a broader, if coarser, sociological approach" to Ford, but flattened GS in the course of his analysis.
- 43 Gordon, ch. 111.
- 44 Hoffmann, p. 81. Of some relevance here to the 'prophetic' quality of GS and Ford's frequent reference to "August 4th" in the novel is the question of when GS was completed. Misener deals with this problem in his biography, and, though noting that "the evidence for dating the completion of The Good Soldier is not definitive", concludes that "on the whole...it seems likely that It was completed early in July, 1914": Misener, p. 565, fn. 21. What seems much more certain is that Ford had in fact begun laying his "auk's egg", as he called GS, before his fortieth birthday. It is also of no little interest to discover that so verbally intricate a novel was in fact dictated: ibid. p. 245.
- 45 GS, I, i, p. 17. It's perhaps worth noting that in BDQ Ford applied the phrase "the saddest story" to the origins of the First World War: "at a given period the one possibility /of a British naval blockade of Germany/ seemed no longer to outweigh the other /Germany's desire to expand to the south and west/ and war came into existence. This is the saddest story in the chronicles of the world" (BDQ, p. 110). Another possible source for Ford's original title might be Thomas Huxley's comment that there is "no sadder story than the story of sentient life on this planet", cited in John A. Lester, Journey Through Despair, p. 59.

- 46 Cassell, pp. 147, 161, 201; cp. Huntley, ch. vi. and Richard Gill, Happy Rural Seat—The English Country House and the Literary Imagination (London, 1972), p. 129. There also exists a number of readings of GS which suggest that novel's religious affiliations, though critics seem undecided as to whether Ford held Protestantism or Roman Catholicism to be the divisive cultural force. Thus Weixner contends that Ford was attributing the world's sorrows to the rise of the former (Weixner, ch. iv), whereas Barnes found that it was the Catholic Church that had shattered religious harmony, not modern scepticism: Daniel R. Barnes, "Ford and the 'Slaughtered Saints': A New Reading of The Good Soldier," Modern Fiction Studies, XIV (Summer 1968), 157/70. See also: Neville Braybrooke, "The Walrus and the Windmill: A Study of Ford Madox Ford," Sewanee Review, LXXIV (Autumn 1966), 810/31, and "Ford Madox Ford: The Writing Windmill," Month, CCXXVI (October 1968), 186/196; Robert J. Andrewach, The Slain and Resurrected God—Conrad, Ford and the Christian Myth (New York, 1970), pp. 128/48; T.A. Banzo, "Downward to Darkness," Sewanee Review, LXXIV (Autumn 1966), 833/55; James Haffley, "The Moral Structure of The Good Soldier," Modern Fiction Studies, V (Summer 1959), 121/8.
- 47 Henry James, Letters (New York, 1920), II, 384 (first emphasis added), letter dated August 14, 1914. The sentence was also quoted in Stephen Spender, The Destructive Element (London, 1937), p. 13, and in Jerome Shule, "The Making of the Edwardian Age," Monats, VII, 11 (Winter 1974), 29.
- 48 GS, I, 1, pp. 17/8.
- 49 Spender, op. cit., p. 14.
- 50 H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890/1930 (New York, 1958), p. 338.
- 51 Lloyd Fernando, "The 'radical' Ideology of the 'New Woman,'" Sewanee Review, II, iii (1967), 206/22; Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, The Line Traveller: The Life of H.C. Wells (London, 1973). Ford played some part in the controversy, supporting the feminist movement editorially in his RR, III (August 1909), 151/42, and writing for the "Women's Freedom League" a sixpenny pamphlet, This monstrous Regiment of Women (1913); Harvey, pp. 37/8. See further, Goldring, South Lodge, pp. 66/7, and The Last Pre-Raphaelite, p. 264. Ford's own comments on the Suffragettes can also be found in RR, p. 406; Letters, ed. Ludwig, p. 47; a letter to New Art, VIII (February 9, 1911), 356/7, cited in Harvey, pp. 166/7; and in GA, ch. vii.
- 52 GS, IV, vi, pp. 217/8. Cp. for example GS, III, i, pp. 105/6, where Lowell weighs the "sex-instinct" against man's "craving for identity"; and GS, IV, i, p. 163, where Leonora "saw life as a perpetual sex-battle between husbands who desire to be unfaithful to their wives, and wives who desire to recapture their husbands in the end."



- 53 On the "romanticism" of GS, see Stang, op. cit.; Meixner, p.150, "a great work of the romantic sensibility"; Huntley, pp. 168/84; James T. Cox, "Ford's 'Passion for Provence,'" English Literary History, XXVIII (December 1961), 383/98, and "The Finest French Novel in the English Language," Modern Fiction Studies, IX, 1 (Spring 1963), 79/93; Ohmann, ch. iv.
- 54 The "irresolvable pluralism" of GS was discussed in an influential essay by Samuel Hynes, "The Epistemology of The Good Soldier," Sewanee Review, LXIX (Spring 1961), 225/35.
- 55 Misener, p. 254; Harold Loeb, "Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier: A Critical Reminiscence," The Carleton Miscellany, VI (Spring 1965), 27/41.
- 56 GS, IV, v, p. 206.
- 57 Stang, op. cit., 557 ("Gothic in its intensity and atmosphere, its vividness and delineation of sexual cruelty and masochism").
- 58 V. S. Pritchett, "The Good Soldier," New Statesman (May 5, 1972); Walter Allen, The English Novel (Harmondsworth, 1958), pp. 328/32.
- 59 L. W. Jones, "The Quality of Sadness in Ford's The Good Soldier," English Literature in Transition, XIII, iv (1970), 296/302.
- 60 GS, IV, vi, p. 218.
- 61 Jones, op. cit., 297.
- 62 GS, IV, iii, p. 192. On the chronology of GS, see Patricia McFate and Bruce Golden, "The Good Soldier: A Tragedy of Self-Deception," Modern Fiction Studies, IX, 1 (Spring 1963), 50/60.
- 63 Misener, p. 257.
- 64 GS, IV, v, p. 201. But see McFate and Golden, op. cit., for the inexactitude of Dowell's chronology at the end of the novel.
- 65 GS, IV, v, p. 202 (emphasis added).
- 66 GS, I, i, p. 16.
- 67 GS, IV, vi, p. 211; IV, v, pp. 203/4.
- 68 Dowell's "bewilderment is Ford's most serviceable device; for it prevents him from having to resolve the book. The convention of the book is that the narrator resolves it by writing it: the last turn of Ford the technician's screw...Ford, one uneasily supposes, doesn't himself know what his attitude is to the situation he presents": Hugh Kenner, "Conrad and Ford," Shenandoah, III (Summer 1952), 50/5.
- 69 "Because both narrator and author accept the human condition of change and uncertainty, neither will pass final judgment": Elliott B. Goss, "The Strange Irregular Rhythm: An Analysis of The Good Soldier," PMLA, LXII (June 1957), 494/509.
- 70 Weisenfarth, op. cit., 39/49.
- 71 "I was perfectly aware," Dowell remarks, "of a slight hesitation - a quick sharp motion in Mrs. Ashburnham, as if her horse had checked" (GS, I, iii, p. 38). See further, Aswell, op. cit., 187/96. I borrow the phrase from Terry Eagleton's discussion of Conrad's Under Western Eyes in Exiles and Emigres: Studies in Modern Literature (London, 1970).
- 72 See, for example, Allen, op. cit., p. 330; Misener, passim.
- 73 Amel's Castle (London, 1961), p. 154.



- 53 On the "romanticism" of GS, see Stang, op. cit.; Meixner, p. 150, "a great work of the romantic sensibility"; Bentley, pp. 168/84; James T. Cox, "Ford's 'Passion for Provence,'" English Literary History, XVIII (December 1961), 383/98, and "The Finest French Novel in the English Language," Modern Fiction Studies, IX, 1 (Spring 1963), 79/93; Ohmann, ch. iv. The "irresolvable pluralism" of GS was discussed in an influential essay by Samuel Rynes, "The Epistemology of The Good Soldier," Sewanee Review, LXXIX (Spring 1961), 223/35.
- 54 Meixner, p. 254; Harold Loeb, "Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier: A Critical Reminiscence," The Carleton Miscellany, VI (Spring 1965), 27/41.
- 55 GS, IV, v, p. 206.
- 56 Stang, op. cit., 357 ("Gothic in its intensity and atmosphere, its vividness and delineation of sexual cruelty and masochism").
- 57 V. S. Pritchett, "The Good Soldier," New Statesman (May 5, 1972); Walter Allen, The English Novel (Harmondsworth, 1958), pp. 328/32.
- 58 L. W. Jones, "The Quality of Sadness in Ford's The Good Soldier," English Literature in Transition, XIII, iv (1970), 276/302.
- 59 GS, IV, vi, p. 218.
- 60 Jones, op. cit., 297.
- 61 GS, IV, iii, p. 192. On the chronology of GS, see Patricia McFate and Bruce Golden, "The Good Soldier: A Tragedy of Self-Deception," Modern Fiction Studies, IX, 1 (Spring 1963), 50/60.
- 62 Meixner, p. 257.
- 63 GS, IV, v, p. 201. But see McFate and Golden, op. cit., for the inconsistencies of Dowell's chronology at the end of the novel.
- 64 GS, IV, v, p. 202 (emphasis added).
- 65 GS, I, i, p. 16.
- 66 GS, IV, vi, p. 211; IV, v, pp. 203/4. Dowell's "bewilderment is Ford's most serviceable device; for it prevents him from having to resolve the book. The convention of the book is that the narrator resolves it by writing it: the last turn of Ford the technician's screw...Ford, one uneasily supposes, doesn't himself know what his attitude is to the situation he presents"; Hugh Kenner, "Conrad and Ford," Shenandoah, III (Summer 1952), 50/5. "Because both narrator and author accept the human condition of change and uncertainty, neither will pass final judgment"; Elliott B. Goss, "The Strange Irregular Rhythms: An Analysis of The Good Soldier," PMLA, LXXII (June 1957), 494/509.
- 67 Wellsfarth, op. cit., 99/49.
- 68 "I was perfectly aware," Dowell remarks, "of a slight hesitation - a quick sharp motion in Mrs. Ashburnham, as if her horse had checked" (GS, I, iii, p. 38). See further, Aswell, op. cit., 187/96. I borrow the phrase from Terry Eagleton's discussion of Conrad's
- 69 Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" in England and America: Studies in Modern Literature (London, 1970).
- 70 See, for example, Allen, op. cit., p. 330; Meixner, passim.
- 71 Amel's Castle (London, 1961), p. 154.

- 72 E. B. Dugan, The Novel and the World's Dilemma (New York, 1947), pp. 39/40; Ernst Fischer, Art Against Ideology (London, 1969), p. 154.
- 73 GS, III, iv, p. 137.
- 74 Allen Tate, The Fathers (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 167.
- 75 Harold P. Mosher, Jr., "Wayne Booth and the Failure of Rhetoric in The Good Soldier," Caliban, IV (1969), 49/52.
- 76 Samuel Hynes, "The Epistemology of The Good Soldier," Sewanee Review, LXIX (Spring 1961), 225/235.
- 77 Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p. 113.
- 78 Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (London, 1973), p. 249.
- 79 In a sense the Ashburnham estate at Bramshaw, like Forster's 'Howards End' or the 'Groby' of FE, can be seen as the epitome of England, for, as a consequence of the agricultural depression of the 'nineties, and of Edward's extravagant benefactions to La Dolciquita, Leonora can only keep the estate solvent until 1914 by some shrewd financial juggling. Similarly, between 1900 and 1914, British capital and income shared doubled from, respectively, £2,000m. and £100m., and was mostly invested in railways. Foreign income was now much larger than the profits from direct trade, the coal and iron industries showing a relative decline compared with Germany and U.S.A. Britain became in these years increasingly "a parasitic usurer State": A. L. Morton, A People's History of England (London, 1938), p. 478. These are some of the parallels between the history of Britain from 1900 to 1914, the era of monopoly capitalism, and the regime of that prudent jobber, Leonora Ashburnham.
- 80 See, for example, Rose Wingfield-Stratford, The Victorian Aftermath 1901 - 1914 (London, 1933), pp. 47, 50/1.
- 81 "Dedictory Letter to Stella Ford" written, for a later edition of GS, on January 9, 1927; the letter is published at the beginning of the recent paperback edition of GS (Harmondsworth, 1972). Other comments about GS by Ford were: that it was his best book (IRN, p. 214); that it was the only novel of his "to count", and that it really had a technique (MTS, p. 280). But, by contrast, he wrote in a letter in November 1931 "I think The Good Soldier is my best book technically unless you read the Tietjens books as one novel in which case the whole design appears. But I think the Tietjens books will probably 'date' a good deal whereas the other may - and need - not" (Letters, ed. Ludwig, p. 204).
- 82 GS, III, iii, p. 129. Lionel Stevenson has also noted that Ashburnham's Indian service suggests the "extent of imperial domination" exerted by pre-war Britain: The History of the English Novel (New York, 1967), II, 80. Ashburnham is surely an exemplar of Trilling's 'sincerity': Sincerity and Authenticity (London, 1972).
- 83 GS, III, iii, p. 132. Op. Marilou B. McLaughlin, "Adjusting the Lens for The Good Soldier," The English Record, XXII, iii (Spring 1972), 41/8. McLaughlin emphasizes the importance of Leonora's early convent education as a cause of her "diabolical acquisitiveness". On Edward's medievalism, see Mary Cohen, "The Good Soldier: Outworn Codes," Studies in the Novel, V, iii (Fall 1973), 28/97.

- 84 GS, III, v, p. 148.  
 85 In Wiley's phrase, "the coil of misfortune issuing from the practices of society as a whole": Wiley, p. 191.
- 86 GS, I, iv, p. 41.  
 87 Georg Lukacs gave a particularly unhesitant exposition of these problems in The Meaning of Contemporary Realism (London, 1963). See also, Burgum, op. cit., and Ralph Fox, The Novel and the People (New York, 1945). More recently, David Cauter has questioned such distrust by Marxists of "decadent modernism" in The Illusion (London, 1971).
- 88 Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (London, 1951), p. 270. See also, Barbara Hardy, The Appropriate Form (London, 1964), p. 207, where Professor Hardy writes, about James, Woolf and Forster, that "it seems roughly true to say that where the formal elements become most conspicuous, the human substance is at its most thin and sketchy." Similarly, W. J. Harvey, Character and the Novel (London, 1965), pp. 184/5. Patrick Swinden devotes part of Unofficial Selves (London, 1973) to a comparison between Bennett's The Old Wives' Tale and GS. Though he admires the latter, he finds it inferior to Bennett's novel, because in GS we don't meet people on the same terms as we encounter them in "life".
- 89 "The perfect dependence of the 'moral' sense of a work of art on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it." Two examples of hostile reviews published in 1915 were those in London's Morning Post (April 5) and in New York's Nation (April 29). "A tale of passion" Mr. Hueffer calls it, but there is no more passion in it than in an entomologist's enthusiasm over his drawer of pinned and varnished beetles"; "But somehow the whole thing fails to focus. We do not quite believe in these people and their affairs": Harvey, pp. 323/4.
- 90 Dreiser's review has been made available in Frank MacShane, ed., Ford Madox Ford: The Critical Heritage (London, 1972), pp. 47/51. Loc. cit.
- 91 V. S. Pritchett, New York Times Book Review (September 16, 1951), 5, cited in Harvey, p. 447. Similarly, W. W. Robson has argued that GS "does everything a novel should do, except the one thing necessary: it does not compel belief": Modern English Literature (London, 1970), p. 106.
- 92 See also, Geoffrey Wagner, op. cit., 76: "the Gothic paraphernalia has been assembled primarily for the novelist to solve...life is there for art to work on."
- 93 Hicks' notice, like Dreiser's, was reprinted in MacShane, op. cit., pp. 194/204. It was first published in Bookman, LXXII (December 1930), 364/70, under the title "Ford Madox Ford - A Neglected Contemporary".
- 94 "Perfection is only one of the qualities of the work of art, and there is a quality superior to perfection itself, and that is life." Remy de Gourmont's comment, from an article on Flaubert, was cited in Robert Liddell, Some Principles of Fiction (Bloomington, 1954), p. 113.

- 95 MacShane, op. cit., pp. 203/4.  
96 Iris Murdoch, in an Encounter essay, "Against Dryness", has described the novel of dry aesthetic concentration, which is more concerned with an ideal of form than with conveying the verisimilitude of reality, as "crystalline". See also, Bernard Bergsoni, The Situation of the Novel, p. 47. Gabriel Josipovici draws a similar distinction between author and fictional character in his comments on Mann's Death in Venice, where the difference is "that Mann is, whereas Aschenbach isn't, able to write the story of Aschenbach's final descent into silence and death. For Mann himself the end is not silence but the articulation of silence": The World and the Book (London, 1971), p. 288.  
97 Letter to Mrs. Lucy Masterman: Ludwig, op. cit., p. 54.

Chapter Six

Ford: Novelist of Reconstruction

3-4 Août. L'Allemagne envahit le Luxembourg, lance un ultimatum à la Belgique. Je suis assailli. Je voudrais être mort. Il est horrible de vivre au milieu de cette humanité démentie, et d'assister, impuissant, à la faillite de la civilisation. Cette guerre européenne est la plus grande catastrophe de l'histoire, depuis des siècles, la ruine de nos espoirs les plus saints en la fraternité humaine.

Romain Rolland, Journal des Années de Guerre 1914 - 1919 (Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1952).

The shapeliness of The Good Soldier had, in March 1915, exemplified modernism's claim to be able to build order out of derangement, for, despite the novel's facade of narrative irresolution, its deepest impulses had been authoritarian and assertive. Eight years elapsed between The Good Soldier and his next novel, The Maresman Case. During which Ford had plenty of opportunity to witness at first hand the challenging disorder of European reality. In a later memoir, It Was The Nightingale (1933), Ford was to record how it was revealed to the soldier in the trenches that beneath Ordered Life itself was stretched the merest film with, beneath it, the abysses of Chaos. One had come from the frail shelters of the Line to a world that was more frail than any canvas hut.<sup>1</sup>

The war and the revelations of this kind that it brought were indeed the major turning-point in Ford's career, as of so many others of his generation, making it impossible for him merely to build upon the highly-structured Good Soldier. Although the latter is demonstrably 'modernist' in its achievement, it didn't come to offer Ford any potential for later growth along similar lines. It was, perhaps, a novel inherently inimitable and Ford seemed to acknowledge that it could bear no progeny when he called

The Good Soldier his "auk's egg". (The last Great Auk had flown and died in 1844.) D. H. Lawrence recorded in Kansaroo how the "old world ended" in 1915 and, for all its literary radicalism, The Good Soldier was, in a sense, too much a part of that rased world to present, after the War, possibilities of confirmation or amplification.<sup>2</sup> It was a consummate achievement and an integral part of this greatness was precisely that it couldn't be duplicated in a changed era. The Good Soldier, then, marks the close of the first half of Ford's career and the years immediately after the Armistice in 1918 are a time of new directions for him, the exploration of new perspectives that is aptly figured, in his personal life, by the decision to emigrate, like Pound, to France; and by the adoption of a new name, the substitution of the second 'Ford' for his father's 'Hueffer'. (The Mardian Case, in May 1923, was the first book to appear from 'Ford Madox Ford', the old name 'Hueffer' appearing only in parenthesis on cover and title-page.)<sup>3</sup>

Circumstances forced silence upon Ford the novelist from 1915 to 1923, and yet the evidence of his later work suggests that perhaps this period of unproductivity was a disguised blessing. (There was a similar gap in the career of E. M. Forster from Howards End (1910) to the early 'twenties; in his case too silence seems to have brought forth a remarkable later harvest.) Certainly from the traumas of war, of mental and physical collapse, there did emerge, hesitantly in The Mardian Case and then more confidently in Some Do Not... (1924), a novelist speaking in very different tones from the pre-war 'Hueffer'. Ford Madox Ford has recorded how, on his return to London literary circles after the war, he felt alienated and unsettled, a half-remembered shade from a distant era, and there is some point in considering Ford's post-war novels as the work of a writer in most important respects



different from the author of The Good Soldier. It was as if war had effected some kind of 'sea-change' upon Ford; or as if he had undergone, in the eight years of silence, a form of organic mutation analogous to the life-cycle of an insect from the chrysalis. We can hardly be surprised to discover such far-reaching changes in Ford's art, for he had been living through a decade, from 1914 to 1924, as momentous as any in Europe since Napoleon and which resulted, as Rolland had prophesied, in the ruin of Europe's most sacred hopes.

The historian tells us that "the changes in manners which followed the war...in many ways created the appearance of a new world."<sup>4</sup> How did the 'resurrected' Ford, living in this "new world" of the 'twenties, differ from the pre-war author of The Good Soldier? In the first place, the titles of his prose between 1920 and 1928 alone suggest one important strand in his development: essays such as A Mirror to France, New York Is Not America and New York Essays; the periodical he edited and called Transatlantic Review. Quite simply, the range of Ford's interests is now wider. There is a new cosmopolitanism, a new concern for international issues; harassed and chastened by war, he now evinces fresh sympathies and broader receptivities. Ford has now a "profounder concern with a world of suffering and crisis on a scale distinct from the Edwardian problems of luxury and dissolving tradition", a "gain in humility and deeper understanding of the general human plight."<sup>5</sup> War, for all its horror, has been an educative, humanising experience for Ford, sharpening rather than dulling his sense of social contradictions. We sense, then, in Ford's fiction in the 'twenties a fresh determination, a new courage and directness in the rendering of human problems.

In the last months of his life Ford was to comment critically on The Good Soldier being "rather thin and timid in handling", and the change in his style suggested by this observation can be illustrated by juxtaposing the

last paragraph he wrote before the war with the opening lines of Parade's End:<sup>6</sup>

I didn't know what to say. I wanted to say, 'God bless you', for I also am a sentimentalist. But I thought that perhaps that would not be quite English good form, so I trotted off with the telegram to Leonarda. She was quite pleased with it.

The two young men - they were of the English public-official class - sat in the perfectly appointed railway carriage. The leather straps to the windows were of virgin newness; the mirrors beneath the new luggage racks immaculate as if they had reflected very little; the bulging upholstery in its luxuriant, regulated curves was scarlet and yellow in an intricate, minute dragon pattern, the design of a geometrician in Cologne. The compartment smelt faintly, hygienically, of admirable varnish; the train ran as smoothly - Tietjens remembered thinking - as British gilt-edged securities. It travelled fast; yet had it swayed or jolted over the rail-joints, except at the curve before Tonbridge or over the points at Ashford where these eccentricities are expected and allowed for, Macmaster, Tietjens felt certain, would have written to the company. Perhaps he would even have written to The Times.

Both paragraphs, The Good Soldier's epilogue and the prologue to Parade's End, are perfect in their different contexts.

Nevertheless the crude act of extracting them from their fictional environment and bringing them into an unintended conjunction does serve to throw into relief some of the fundamental alterations in Ford's fiction between 1914 and 1924.

Both passages are placed by an authorial irony in which the problematic

issue is the nature and working of what Dowell calls "English good form". Dowell thinks that this form would be infringed were he to address an intending suicide, just as Macmaster held that trains "do not" - to use this novel's controlling verb - jolt except at Tembridge and Ashford. The irony at work in the two extracts requires, however, finer discrimination.

The Good Soldier's is a mournful product of a gap between Dowell's perception of what is proper and the reader's sense that a fuller, more humane response is required in these somewhat unusual circumstances. In Some Do Not..., on the other hand, Ford's irony is 'dramatic', as his readers perceive that the superficial order of the opening scene in the railway carriage will be shattered by later, public and private horrors of which the two travellers can have no present conception. In The Good Soldier we might say that the irony is 'qualitative' in that we place the limitations of Dowell's response against the possibilities, available at the same time and documented by Forster and Lawrence, of a more passionate and generously energetic existence. In Some Do Not...., however, an 'historical' irony is felt to be operating as Ford leads us to remark upon the time-bound innocence of Macmaster and Tietjens. The eyes of these two will be opened only by the full development of events that are prefigured faintly in this 'prologue'. And so the differences between these two varieties of irony can be seen to encapsulate for us the nature of Ford's development across the watershed of the War. The Good Soldier had been built around a series of subtle variations in the pluperfect tense. The future tense is notable largely for its absence and the novel's ironies are lachrymose and static. In Parade's End, on the other hand, the irony is a sterner, more masculine mood to which the unfolding of the future is intrinsic. Thus, whereas Dowell's 'education' is a product of reminiscence and his re-evaluation of new information about the past, Tietjens' maturation springs from his experience of a progression of unforeseen pressures and unexpected

affinities.

There is, then, in Ford's post-war work and especially in Parade's End an opulence and density of verbal texture far removed from the austerities of the synchronic Good Soldier. Indeed the central impulse behind the latter was the effort to pare away excrencences, to reduce fiction to its most economical form, the result being a model of narrative thrift. In Parade's End, though, we sense a radically different drive. Here Ford is bent on amplitude, on a leisured, historicist rendering of context and milieu such as he had presented once before, in his Tudor trilogy. Now, however, it is the present, or at least the immediate past, that Ford is vivifying, and his reconstruction is done with an energy which, in A Call and The Good Soldier, had been directed towards formal or structural exactitude.

Throughout Parade's End, but there does run through all of these there's a deep concern with the tangibilities of the natural world, with men and their relationship to such things as, for instance, leather straps, mirrors and bulging upholstery. So dominant had been the sense of memory in The Good Soldier that the senses of hearing, touch, sight and smell - all so active in Parade's End - had been, in the earlier novel, virtually defunct. Ford had emerged safely from a deranged world, one frailer than any "canvas hut", and often seems to be revelling in the very simple pleasure of his own continuing survival. Thus many of the quartet's most vivid scenes are 'sensuous': the sight of a dawn mist over the Sussex countryside in June; the tackiness of a soldier's congealing blood. The sheer length of so much post-war fiction - of Arnold Zweig's A Trilogy of the Transition, R. N. Mottram's Spanish Farm trilogy, as of Parade's End - is but one indication of the novelist's delight in that reprieve granted to all the survivors. Though Zweig, Mottram and Ford are all, in different degrees,

critical, dissenting novelists, their fiction is united by a certain 'testamentary' quality, the determination to publish a belief in man's power to survive the unspeakable.

The historical solidity of Parade's End, evident in the meticulous, detailed 'camera-work' of the opening paragraph, that repleteness with which Ford situates his action in a spatial and temporal frame; and Ford's fresh interest in international issues, the relationship of Mediterranean and Nordic civilisations: these are the constituents of his fiction in the 'twenties which are united under a different view of the social responsibilities of Art. Even before the War, in the pages of his English Review, Ford had been thinking about this question, trying to place imaginative literature within the context of a dissolving polity. Now, however, he had first-hand experience of dissolution, and the War provided him with an urgent impulse to validate literature in social terms. The results of Ford's deliberations, his more socially-responsible aesthetic, were set down in his essays of this period, in Thus to Revisit, Joseph Conrad and A Mirror to France. Here he contends that Art must be both international and popular, for, so he argues, only in this way can a repetition of barbarism be avoided: "a great, really popular Art, founded on, and expressive of a whole people, is the sole witness of the non-barbarity of a Race".<sup>7</sup> Ford had lived through a decade in which the nations of the world had been polarised into two destructive camps and he was now driven to use his work as a means of uniting states and continents. Art has an important social function in an era of reconstruction because it is the sole remedy for a "harassed humanity". It "alone can give you knowledge of the hearts, the necessities, the hopes and the fears of your fellow men; and such knowledge alone can guide us through life without disaster".<sup>8</sup> The nationalism of governments severs: only the internationalism of Art can connect. Ford's is a grand design, a vision of the western world united in a

"republic of the Arts and of Pure Thought", "a region where the clearnesses of Thought and the exotitudes of Art are honoured", a pantisocracy in which it was the artist's responsibility to communicate with all his audience, across the boundaries of language, class and nation.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed Art's 'audience', the novelist's distant and solitary readers, is crucial to Ford's post-war aesthetic. Art must be a "popular" form, he asserts, and everything must be subordinated to the holding of the reader's attention. Symptomatic perhaps of this new concern is Ford's attempt to exploit, in the extraordinary, Joycean, Mr. Bosphorus and the Hussa (1923), the popular art-forms, traditional and modern, of the harlequinade, the music hall, and the silent film. Technique's sole justification, Ford wrote in Joseph Conrad, is that it is the only means of keeping a reader's interest. The whole of the novelist's craft, all his armoury of devices, must be directed to grasping and holding the reader in the ultimate service of art's internationalist concerns. 'Technique' per se - Ford calls the word "dangerous" - must be subservient to these wider artistic purposes, since literature

is a matter of the writer's attitude towards life, and has nothing in the world to do - nothing whatever in the world to do - with whether the lines in which this attitude is put before him be long or short; rhymed or unrhymed; cadenced or interrupted by alliterations or assonances.<sup>10</sup>

A novelist's style must be clear - "as clear and as simple as is consonant with the subject treated" - but the novelist should avoid preaching to his readers.<sup>11</sup>

nationalist, propagandist art. The aesthetic of Joseph Conrad, the novelist, is believed that the best is unambiguously so. Ford's novelist must never utter any views, must never propagandise for any cause; he holds that man is improved by being delighted more than by reading 'improving', moralistic works. Art's



furthest limit is to make man more merciful and understanding, but it cannot reform. Tendenciopoesis, a didactic, programmatic art, is abjured. Ford's fiction of these years exemplifies the deep humanitarian concerns which he now took to be literature's proper interest, while, at the same time, showing his refusal to employ fiction as a vehicle for explicit proselytism.

Central to Ford's theory and practice in this decade is his ecological preoccupation: his demand for the maximum clarity of style in literature is the equivalent of his hatred of extravagance in the environment. In both art and in society his cell is for frugality. Hence his passion for the civilization of the south of France is only his admiration for the limpidities of Flaubert and Maupassant writ large and translated into a wider, cultural context. The way-of-life of the Provencal smallholder (or, rather, Ford's version of such an existence) thus provides a model for artist and citizen alike. Man lives in harmony with nature, content with his round of pastoral simplicities and spurning the industrialism, big business and "gilded hotels" of Nordic civilisation. In Ford's view, the Nordic dream, what he calls the "Monte Carlo" ideal, is a nightmare, "a tragedy of waste, of brayings, of pimpings, marble, cheap gildings", and in its place Ford would prefer the essential Mediterranean values of "chivalric generosity, frugality, pure thought and the arts".<sup>12</sup> Ford no doubt romanticised France - his comment that "when a leader of men arises in France he will find men - and that can be said of no other country" is as prophetic of Pétain as of de Gaulle - but such idealism between the wars perhaps involved less distortion of the truth and ignored fewer realities than the veneration by other English intellectuals of the Soviet Union under Stalin.<sup>13</sup> What is, in any event, beyond civil is that this structure of values, this love of husbandry in literature and in life, gave birth, in the

form of Parade's End, to a major imaginative creation of the twentieth century.

Earlier Ford had postulated an historiography of continuing conflict between national forces within England. Now he widens his perspective to advance the view that the whole course of western history is a record of the Nordic threats to the Mediterranean civilisations.<sup>14</sup> In the 'twenties and 'thirties Ford envisions the Anglo-American bloc, bleated with luxuries as a result of its victory in 1918, jeopardising the frugality and indigence of the Mediterranean littoral in a further cycle of this historical conflict. But to Ford the civilisation of Provence offered man's only real hope of avoiding a second holocaust and his work from 1920 until his death is an attempt to unite, in peace, Mediterranean and Nordic, to substitute the "realism" of the French for the "sentimentalism" of the English and the "romanticism" of the Germans. Within this over-arching purpose lie, variously but not inconsistently, an attack on the standardisation of western food and on the mass-production of Europe and the U.S.A; a demand for a literary style of economy and lucidity; and Parade's End's impulse away from authoritarianism in the direction of decentralisation. In Ford's post-war thinking the values of the metropolitan club give way to those of the rural, self-sufficient homestead, and the Edwardian ideology of 'honour' is replaced by the need for ecological harmony. Balance and concord are the prime impulses behind the second half of Ford's career. "In the end", he wrote in the lyrical Mirror to France, "a civilisation is measured by the proportion of its citizens that can sit still on gray rocks and think".<sup>15</sup> To increase this fortunate proportion, to democratise the opportunities for peaceful meditation, these are the generous ends of all Ford's writings after the war, and a widening of sympathy of this kind is intrinsic to such 'post-modernist' art. Difficulties only arise when Ford tried to set down in fictional terms an

activity as bereft of dramatic conflict as peaceful coexistence "on grey rocks".

One of his visitors has commented on the "feudal" quality of Ford's private life in the 'twenties and while this may have been superficially true of his domestic circumstances, the observation has had the harmful effect of encouraging critics to view his work simply as an unchanged expression of his earlier admiration for the Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup> The reality is rather more complex and some place must be found in any serious account of Ford's intellectual development, as it was embodied in his fiction, for - to give only one example - his progressive public stand towards Ireland in the 'twenties. (Margaret Cole has attested to Ford's "love of freedom" and how in 1920 he was directing "a propaganda campaign against the Black-and-Tans and the English occupation of Ireland". Goldring, too, has written of Ford's passionate reaction to Irish atrocities and of his leading part in producing a writers' manifesto.)<sup>17</sup> These were scarcely the activities of a mediaeval hermit. It is always hazardous, of course, to affix a single political or ideological 'label' to so complex an organism as an imaginative artist and T. S. Eliot's celebrated announcement of his royalism and catholicism can be seen, in part, as an ironic comment on these difficulties. The danger is always of oversimplification and

...and so Ford is unjustly by displaying ... in ... with ... his opposition to Imperialism, in which he differed from many ... Similarly, in the period now under review Ford is not easily to 'pigeonhole'. Thus in 1926 he was claiming that he was fundamentally of the Right:

I have always been contentedly and unobtrusively inclined to the extreme Right in political matters, but...I have never considered myself sufficiently intelligent to interfere

in the internal politics of my own country....<sup>18</sup>

This comment, so characteristic of Ford's systematic effort to surround himself with a smokescreen of pseudocriticism, muffles his vociferous interest, if not 'interference', in Britain's government of Ireland in 1920, and, moreover, is hardly consonant with his remark in the following year, 1927, that he is "instinct with the sense of the equality of all human beings".<sup>19</sup> We find a similar contradiction between his hatred of militarism in this year -

militarism is the antithesis of Thought and the Arts, and it is by Thought and the Arts alone that the world can be saved.<sup>20</sup>

- and his published love of the British Army in 1926 for "its efficiency, its solidarity, its construction on a sound basis of psychology", qualities which make it, in Ford's eyes, one of the only two satisfactory institutions in the world.<sup>21</sup>

Ford's work of the 'twenties is so replete with paradoxes that, as we tack giddily from left to right, we may be reminded less of anything resembling 'feudalism' and more of the Social Credit movement between the wars. Ford, it appears, made no explicit reference to this group, though his friend Ezra Pound had been a Social Creditor "since at least 1920", but there is an underlying similarity between C. W. Douglas' thinking and Ford's after 1920. It is this analogy, these broad similitudes between patterns of thought and feeling, to which I draw attention, rather than any overt commitment by Ford to Social Credit.<sup>22</sup> The 'school' was 'founded' by Douglas at the end of the war and his theories had been published in Orage's New Age from 1919 onwards. A by-product of the National Guild Movement, Social Credit repudiated doctrines of economic liberalism, the two main planks of its platform being a hatred of the existing system of banking and finance with a concern for the individual as against the

monopolistic State. Social Credit has scarcely been, outside Alberta, a major political force in the twentieth century, although its monetary theories have far-reaching political and social implications. Douglas rejected both capitalism and socialism, the latter because it wouldn't increase, in his view, the individual's freedom. For the same reason he was always opposed to any central organization for Social Crediters and, as a consequence, the 'twenties and 'thirties were marked by frustration and intercorne quarrels among his adherents, some, like Pound, being attracted to Fascism. Ford's own 'factoid' of an international conspiracy of Jewish financiers - the basis of his historical novel of the Napoleonic Wars, A Little Less Than Gods - was part of Douglas' thinking, as was indeed Ford's concern for the rights of the individual and his abhorrence of both versions of totalitarianism. More broadly, the mixture of two extremes in Ford's ideology, his affection for anarchism alongside his abjuration of conventional socialist panaceas, was duplicated in both Guild Socialism and the later Social Credit. All three shared a desire for the loosening of controlling ties and a belief in both the potential of creative anomaly - the vitality inherent in disorder is central to Ford's theory of memoir and biography - and in what John Finlay has called that "quickly aroused sympathy with a non-sequential way of thought which is inherently incapable of maintaining itself for long".<sup>23</sup> Ford indeed loathed all post-war governments, economists and politicians. His remedy, too, was non-political: the assemblage of "quiet, decent people" across national barriers to change public opinion.<sup>24</sup>

In this way Ford's stance on economics and aesthetics alike can be viewed as reflections of a broadly 'Creditist' position. His new preoccupation with art's need to communicate widely and internationally; his concern, patent in the opening of Parade's End, that the novel should be more generally available;

the quartet's evidence, both in style and in content, of its author's suspicion of monolithic structures, political or aesthetic; his aversion from didacticism and a moral impulse that was censorious and centralising; taken together, these attitudes form a coherent response to the artistic and cultural problems of reconstruction. In such a response, whether that of Douglas the economic theorist or of Ford the novelist, the necessity to stake out an independent position is clearly fundamental. Hence, as Douglas sought to free himself from allegiance to both capitalism and socialism, Ford as a writer attempted his own emancipation from what he called "Established Morality", an impulse symbolised by his decision to emigrate. And so in The Transatlantic Review Ford becomes the subordination of English writers through the ages to what Raymond Williams has called the "dominant culture":

Living for the artist of England has always meant lip-service to the Established - to the Established Church for a great portion of the three hundred years, to Established Social Systems, to Established Political Parties at various times; and always to Established Morality.<sup>25</sup>

In another, similar observation Ford remarked trenchantly that to be a writer in England after the War was, because of the pressures to conform to the conventional and established, to be like "a tin of jellied eels that has for years reposed on a country grocer's shelves".<sup>26</sup> By the act of uprooting himself and emigrating to France the "eel" that was Ford tried to extricate itself from the "jelly" of an inhibiting society. Parade's End is an account, similarly, of Tietjens' sustained attempt to break loose from discredited conventions.

The Marston Case was an earlier effort to fashion a man's rebellion and search for independence from a corrupt but regnant culture. Like Parade's End, it tells of the triumph of one man, Lord George Marston, over a neurasthenia



induced by the War and by the persecution of his civilian enemies. Though there are no battle-scenes, war is nevertheless the central experience of The Marston Case, because Ford had understood that the new 'total war' obliterates the line that used to separate home and front. War is now just an extension, an intensification of civilian hostilities, and the soldier drawn into the conflict is, as he put it, "homo duplex", a combatant tortured by thoughts of home, "a poor fellow whose body is tied in one place, but whose mind and personality brood eternally over another distant locality".<sup>27</sup> Thus Jessop, the novel's narrator, reflects that War was not a "magic and invisible tent" sheltering the soldier from domestic pressures, but an aggravation of those cares; "round your transparent tent, the old evils, the old heart-breaks and the old cruelties are unceasingly at work".<sup>28</sup> Still more radical in its social implications was Ford's new grasp of the individual civilian's complicity in, and responsibility for mass-slaughter. Jessop, again, points to the effect of war upon everyone alive in 1923 - "the eyes, the ears, the brain and the fibres of every soul today adult have been profoundly seared by those dreadful wickednesses of embattled humanity" - but the novel also infers that domestic strife, sexual and class divisions, had in fact caused the international hostilities.<sup>29</sup> Lawrence was illuminating a similar connection in such stories of the early 'twenties as "The Fox" and "The Ladybird", and in Chapter Twelve of Kangaroo, published in the same year as The Marston Case, he analysed the real meaning of the cliché 'civilian war'. Using images that light up the ubiquity of war, he wrote that London in 1915/1916 "perished, perished from being a heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors".<sup>30</sup> This, precisely, is the subject of The Marston Case: the insidious jarring violence from July 1914, when the novel opens, to the Armistice - as prevalent in a London night-club as in the French trenches. Ford's reconstruction of madness, of a whole society living on its nerve-ends,

is done with great intensity and, as a contemporary reviewer noted, the novel is "a brilliant and magnificent nightmare".<sup>31</sup> And yet, for all its vividness, The Maraden Case is only a limited success.<sup>32</sup> For one thing, the central plotting of the story around George's attempt to establish that he is Lord Maraden's rightful heir seems contrived and arbitrary: it doesn't grow out of the novel's core as does Tietjens' persecution by London society. As a result, there is something less than inevitable about George's plight, his "psychological Grand Guignol", an element of unabsorbed melodrama.<sup>33</sup> And equally this plight, George's harrowing, is distanced too much by Jessop, Ford's narrator; we are not permitted to share his torture in the way in which we are drawn into the wracked mind of Christopher Tietjens. Tietjens becomes so large a figure in Parade's End that, for all his local improbabilities, he achieves a representative status as a 'type' of all human suffering in those years. George Maraden doesn't impress with this kind of power: his dilemma is too narrowly particular and it's difficult to generalise outwards from his single torment. Ford, then, failed "to convince us that these characters and events are representative and revealing of their society".<sup>34</sup> Finally, although Ford creates a powerful sense of this world's ability to torture an individual, mentally and physically, to suicide, there is a strange lack of connection between the public events and the suffering hero. Improbably, George seems not to change in any important respect, despite everything he undergoes, and we find it difficult to believe that his "high-mindedness", his "passion for decorum of behaviour" is so immune to external pressures. The anguished consciousness appears oddly untouched by social and political reality. Perhaps the root of the trouble lies in Ford's use of Jessop, who, like Dowell, tells the story "in spots", as it comes back to his mind years later. Yet the potential width and depth of this story, the universality of its implications, surely required a different narrative form from that employed in Romanesque and

The Good Soldier. In Parade's End Ford discarded his involved narrator in favour of an omniscient detached observer.

With all its flaws, though, The Marston Case is a moving and memorable novel and, bearing in mind Ford's own personal circumstances, a notable achievement. One doesn't quickly forget his rendering of the frenetic mood of 1914, "an accursed year"; nor the suicide of George's father on August 4th, 1914, and his son's attempt to follow him in 1916, before he is rescued by his wife; nor, indeed, the burning of George's lodgings in 1915 and the murder of his German landlady in London. Such scenes are as emblematic of the period as Lawrence's account of his persecution in Cornwall.

Ford's portrayal, then, of the moral bankruptcy that led to the war and the disillusionment that followed is powerfully effective. The problems begin to arise in The Marston Case, and in A Little Less Than Gods, when Ford seeks to move beyond disenchantment and the death of heroism. Faced with a similar problem, D. H. Lawrence built up in The Plumed Serpent and Aaron's Rod an ideology based on a dominant male culture. Ford wasn't attracted to a solution in these terms and yet the need to formulate some alternative modus vivendi is the most pressing problem he faced in this decade. Sceptical, like C. H. Douglas, of the available political solutions, Ford had to discover some substantial creed for his heroes, for Marston and Tietjens, after their abandonment of the politics and culture of the metropolis. Ford, of course, wasn't alone in this search. Indeed this was the dominant theme soon after the war, "the literature of the early nineteen-twenties offer[ing] various reflections of the efforts to continue living made by those on whom the memories of the war weighed most painfully".<sup>35</sup> What this literature also indicates is the greater success artists achieved in giving fictional form to their "memories of the war" than in building the foundations of a new life in

imaginative, or indeed personal terms. In Ford's case, Parade's End was his most courageous and sustained attempt to find an answer, to suspend a bridge from the era of destruction to the period of peace. But even here, in this noble achievement, it is symptomatic of the wider issues involved that there should be general critical agreement that the quartet's final section, Last Post, is the least successful feature of the design. That novel's comparative insubstantiality, when set alongside the three earlier sections, must be viewed in the wider historical context, the complexity of evolving an emergent culture, political or aesthetic, which would appear coherent and solid.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

- 1 IWN, p. 49.
- 2 "It was in 1915 the old world ended": Kangaroo  
(Harmondsworth, 1950), p. 240.
- 3 Harvey, p. 55.
- 4 Henry Pelling, Modern Britain 1885 - 1955 (London, 1969),  
p. 114. Cp. George Lichtheim, Lukacs (London, 1970), p. 22.
- 5 Wiley, pp. 132, 204.
- 6 Letters, ed. Ludwig, p. 295; letter dated June 1938.
- 7 TR, p. 19.
- 8 Ibid, pp. 19, 7.
- 9 MF, p. 269.
- 10 TR, p. 185. "The dangerous word technique": JC, p. 173.
- 11 TR, II, 1v (October 1924), 398.
- 12 MF, pp. 284, 14.
- 13 Ibid, p. 31.
- 14 Ibid, pp. 112 et seq.
- 15 Ibid, p. 285 (emphasis added).
- 16 Alec Waugh, cited in Goldring, The Last Pre-Raphaelite, p. 218.
- 17 Margaret I. Cole, Growing Up Into Revolution (London, 1949),  
pp. 82/3; Douglas Goldring, Odd Man Out: The Autobiography of a  
"Propaganda Novelist" (London, 1955), p. 209. See Harvey,  
pp. 500, 523/4.
- 18 MF, p. 101.
- 19 NYINA, p. 7.
- 20 "Preparedness," New York Herald Tribune Magazine, 7 (November 6,  
1927), 18, cited in Harvey, p. 245.
- 21 MF, p. 101.
- 22 John I. Finlay, Social Credit: The English Origins (Montreal,  
1972), p. 174. From Finlay's book I have drawn many of my comments  
about Social Credit. For a discussion of Pound and Social Credit,  
see Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (London, 1972), pp. 407/13.
- 23 Finlay, Social Credit, p. 254.
- 24 MF, pp. 233 et seq.
- 25 TR, II, 1 (July 1924), 69.
- 26 NYINA, p. 142.
- 27 IWN, p. 197. Cp. Wiley, pp. 207/8.
- 28 MF, p. 305.
- 29 Ibid, p. 144.
- 30 Kangaroo, p. 240.
- 31 The Times Literary Supplement (May 10, 1923), 320, cited in  
Harvey, p. 339.
- 32 Miscner, pp. 489/494.
- 33 Ibid, p. 492.
- 34 Ibid, p. 494.
- 35 Bernard Bergsoni, Haross' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of  
the Great War (London, 1965), p. 144.

Chapter Seven

Parade's End

"Why, on the surface of these blanched sands  
In characters legible in Orion's belt  
I'll write such love and wisdom!"

(Mister Bosphorus and the Queen, Act IV, Sc. VI)

- 1 -

This "love and wisdom" promised at the end of Mister Bosphorus are most generously displayed in the quartet of novels that immediately followed, Parade's End (1924/1928). The novels map, with a fine, humane sympathy, their hero's search for a full love-relationship, a journey which provides Parade's End with its major narrative thread. "The rescue into love" of Christopher Tietjens is the theme of Ford's tetralogy as it is of Middlemarch and of the contemporaneous Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928).<sup>1</sup> In all three novels "love" and "wisdom" are virtually synonymous. Love leads to wisdom, and understanding is unobtainable without emotional fulfillment; the loveless, Casaubon, Chatterley, Sylvia Tietjens, remain benighted. In The Good Soldier love had been destructive and deceptive, but Parade's End's emphasis on the educative and therapeutic powers of love links it and Lawrence's novel with the mainstream of nineteenth-century fiction - with Mansfield Park and Emma, with Far From the Madding Crowd, with much Dickens and Eliot, and, in the eighteenth century, with Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews. Yet it is towards this same tradition that both Ford and Lawrence were, from different critical positions, most hostile. It is, therefore, a singular coincidence that both should return to the same sources and examples when they came to write of the "reconstructed world" of the 'twenties.

In Ford's case the decision to render the war and its aftermath by means



of the emotional development of an individual involved the modification of that Hulsian aesthetic which had sustained The Good Soldier.

Reminiscential and synchronic, that novel had, through both form and content, denied the possibility of development and improvement. Being epistemological and self-reflexive, it had implied a radical human pessimism of the kind offered in Hulme's "Romanticism and Classicism". Now, however, in Parade's End, despite the historical traumas which had intervened, Ford appears to be adopting a position which Hulme (who had died in 1917) would have dismissed as 'romantic'. Parade's End's salvation through love seems to imply a belief in progress and the possibility of individual growth. It appears to be based, with its fundamental meliorism, on that "humanist idealism" denigrated by Hulme in his essay "Humanism and the Religious Attitude". On The Good Soldier Ford's published comments had all referred to the novel's formal geometry, whereas Parade's End is glossed in terms of its content and its didactic purpose. The quartet, Ford wrote in It Was The Nightingale, was "a work that should have for its purpose the obviating of all future wars" and his Preface to both No More Parades and A Man Could Stand Up - had also referred to this overriding aim.<sup>2</sup> Character and episode are then, in Parade's End, fashioned by imperatives that lie outside the boundaries of the novel, by the author's desire to construct a work of fiction that will modify human behaviour. The Good Soldier hadn't possessed these extra-literary loyalties, since there episode and character only echoed and reflected other scenes and motives within the novel itself.

In thus abandoning the fictional purism of The Good Soldier, its studied distance from applicability and social purposiveness, Parade's End may appear at first glance to signal Ford's desertion from the tenets of "modernism". Because of its length, its advertised concern with the prevention of further wars and its generous investment in the "human substance" of growing

characters and their search for a regenerating relationship, the quartet may be argued to have betrayed all the technical advances made by The Good Soldier. The latter's elegance, that quality noted as being so "French", was in fact dependent on a very narrow range of human emotions - jealousy and uncertainty, for the most part - and a limited narrative tone. Ford's range in Parade's End is, in every respect, wider: more characters, more emotional diversity and a narrative that is in turn comic, tragic and farcical. The architecture of the quartet is, then, on a larger scale than The Good Soldier's: we might almost riposte that the former is a very "English" creation. But its Englishness involves no abandonment of Ford's commitment to design, no regression to innocent pre-Jamesian modes. Rather Parade's End illustrates a development and enrichment of the strategies employed in The Good Soldier, the novelist having added the shape of actual lived history to that elaborate, but autonomous, system of balance and counter-balance that had constituted Dowell's narrative. The equation to be solved in Parade's End is now more complex, involving an extra 'unknown', since the subjective impulses of the central characters, Sylvia and Valentine and the Tietjens brothers, must be made congruent with the recorded eddies of historical experience between 1912 and 1920. Parade's End is, therefore, not so much an expanded version of The Good Soldier as a work with an added, historical, dimension. Ford's most sharply original achievement, it is a fiction that tries to weld the sophisticated modernist insights he had perfected in 1915 with the more expansive reportorial functions of a Dickens or Thackeray. As such, it offers valuable proof that an artist's concern with "love and wisdom" needn't be accompanied by any diminution of formal rigours, of the kind Ford had criticised in Victorian fiction.

Ford himself wrote very clearly about the historical dimensions of the Tietjens novels. "I wanted the Novelist", he recalled in It Was The Nightingale (1934), "in fact to appear in his really proud position as historian of his own time. Proust being dead I could see no one who was doing that..."<sup>3</sup> "My subject", he continued, "was the public events of a decade", and "the world as it culminated in the war".<sup>4</sup> He had aspired to write a novel "in which all the characters should be great masses of people--or interests", a phrase that recalls his description of the "whole human cosmogony" of Nostromo, but he recognises that he is unequipped for this task. So instead, he realized, he would have to "fall back on the old device of a world seen through the eyes of a central observer." However "the tribulations of the central observer must be sufficient to carry the reader through his observations of the crumbling world." By 'sufficient' here Ford meant, surely, sufficiently typical or capable of wide application. The observer's troubles, Tietjens' disasters, had to be rendered as representative of the common fate of all the combatants. The individual had to personify the "great masses of people--or interests". Ford described the private soldier as "homo duplex: a poor fellow whose body is tied in one place, but whose mind and personality brood eternally over another distant locality." Christopher Tietjens was designed to carry the weight of what Ford saw as a general condition.<sup>5</sup> Ford was thus setting himself the task of epitomising the activities of large numbers of people with the same insight he had brought to private individual destinies in The Good Soldier. Or, to put

it another way, he was attempting to adapt the techniques of the "Fifth Queen" trilogy for use now on contemporary material. Thus the very different skills he had taught himself in those earlier works were now reassembled in Parade's End.

What this means in practice is that the "affair", the domestic tribulations of a small circle of people that produced the claustrophobic complexities of The Benefactor, A Call, The Marsden Case and The Good Soldier, here possesses an extra dimension of felt historical significance. Individual embroilments are now densified with, as it were, a culturally emblematic value. But although Ford writes in Parade's End as the "historian of his own time", he doesn't need to introduce real figures and incidents in order to achieve these ends. In The Fifth Queen Henry VIII, Katharine Howard and Wolsey were all modelled, more or less closely, on actual historical figures. In the quartet, Tietjens, Sylvia and Valentine are Ford's own creations, yet all are endowed with an acute sense of their

own historical roles. That is to say, each of them is aware, particularly at moments of crisis or decision, that an individual dilemma has a public, historical dimension. Thus Sylvia's realisation in Last Post that her sybaritic pastimes cannot be continued in the changed England of the 'twenties is charged with a wider cultural emphasis:

Her main bitterness was that they had this peace. She was cutting the painter, but they were going on in this peace; her world was waning. It was the fact that her friend Bobbie's husband, Sir Gabriel Blantyre - formerly Bosenheim - was cutting down expenses like a lunatic. In her world there was the writing on the wall. Here they could afford to call her a poor bitch - and be in the right of it, as like as not!<sup>6</sup>

The repeated phrase her world carries in this extract a double significance, referring both to Sylvia's fictional 'set' of friends within the novel and, as well, to that real historical class which existed in England in 1920, outside the novel. Sylvia is both a remarkable fictional character and a personification of major forces in English post-war history.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Valentine Wannop's dilemma at the opening of A Man Could Stand Up -, when she is wondering whether she should obey the injunctions of her mother and her Headmistress to remain "manlike", or whether she should commit herself to Christopher, is presented as representative of a wider questioning in post-war Europe of traditional moral sanctions:

It was absurd to think that she could be wanted for that [to give MacMaster callisthenics]! An absurd business.... There she was, bursting with health, strength, good humour, perfectly full of beans - there she was, ready in the cause of order to give Leah Meldenstamm, the large girl, no end of a clump on the side of the jaw or, alternatively, for the sake

of all the beamfeastishnesses in the world to assist in the amiable discomfiture of the police. There she was in a sort of Nonconformist cloister. Munlike! Positively munlike! At the parting of the ways of the universe!

She whistled slightly to herself.

"By Jove," she exclaimed coolly, "I hope it does not mean an omen that I'm to be - oh, munlike - for the rest of my career in the reconstructed world!"<sup>8</sup>

Once again, world has, in Ford's rendering of Valentine's thoughts, a double meaning, since it refers both to the autonomous, fictional existence Miss Wamop perceives around her and to the real historical tensions Parade's End reflects. Ford's combination of the roles of modernist novelist and of annalist is thus grounded on the ambiguities, sustained throughout the quartet, of "world" as a word suggestive of fictive microcosm and of factual macrocosm. Herein lies the cognitive value of Parade's End.

The argument that Ford's treatment of his material is internal and psychological, not external and historical as in The Forsyte Saga, is therefore founded on an untenable distinction.<sup>9</sup> What Parade's End does in fact demonstrate is the artificiality of that division between 'historical' and 'private', especially during periods of enormous social convulsion. It reveals in the imaginative terms of art the congruence between history and the inner life:

Parade's End dramatizes the impact of a historical crisis upon individuals - concretely realized persons who are representative of every level of English society; and the inner life which the author thereby reveals is always consonant with and reflective of the outer world.<sup>10</sup>



The quartet is remarkable for the acuteness of Ford's insight into the political effects of disruption, the end of "feudalism" and the beginning of the modern world, on his imagined characters. In Parade's End characters and society continually complement and reinforce each other as historical event and common life are merged. In this respect at least, there is something almost "Russian" about Parade's End in the way it recalls On the Eve and Fathers and Sons or even, in its magnitude, Anna Karenina.

Ford's reputation as a novelist has undeniably been tarnished by the very success with which in memoir and biography he practised his own brand of "impressionism", offering less factual veracity than truthfulness of mood and personality. Ford's power as a fabulist, that ability to make his readers doubt even the most circumstantial statement made about himself or his associates, renders the achievement of Parade's End even more singular. In 1919 the old 'landed interest' sold over a million acres of land, the popular phrase of the day being "England is changing hands"; perhaps no transfer of land so permanent or so large had been known since the dissolution of the monasteries in Tudor times.<sup>11</sup> This indeed is the social convulsion that Parade's End mediates with such cogency and historical verisimilitude. The quartet impresses us with a minuteness of detail and knowledge usually associated in English fiction with 'regional' novelists - with, say, Hardy's Wessex or Bennett's Potteries. Parade's End is not, in this sense, a regional novel. Nevertheless Ford compels us to believe in the landowners who are largely his subject - the Campions, the Satterthwaites and the Tietjens - with as much confidence as we accord to Constance and Sophia in The Old Wives' Tale or to Tess and her wretched family. Parade's End, then, seems truthful not as a result of Ford's intimacy with provincial patterns of behaviour but because of his understanding of a class, the large rural landowners who work and play in Whitehall and the West End. Indeed it is

precisely because of the absence of any strong provincial affections in these people - none of whom spend any great time in their country houses, and the future of whose estates is mortgaged to historical uncertainty - that Ford's central characters appear so vulnerable. His subject is the lives of a class in the very process of deracination and the value of Parade's End resides, to a large extent, in Ford's grasp of the general historical significance of such climactic changes. Much of his earlier fiction had proved incapable of, and uninterested in generating this larger cultural relevance. The problems delineated in A Ball and The Benefactor, for example, had seemed too quirkily individual, too eccentric almost, too private. Now, however, in the Tietjens quartet, Ford accords individual lives an enriching typicality. This important accretion he achieves through the artist's power of 'totalisation', that ability, commonly attributed to Tolstoy, of being able to see a society whole. It is what Terry Eagleton defines as "the act of grasping the elements of a culture in their living and changing inter-relations" and further, in his chapter on Auden, as "the capacity to pose personal feeling and public event, local detail and general vision, in mutually illuminating relation".<sup>12</sup>

To attribute documentary value to Parade's End is by no means a cliché of Ford criticism. Indeed it has frequently been claimed that its truthfulness as a record of the "pre-history of the present" is marred by Ford's portrayal of his hero, Christopher Tietjens.<sup>13</sup> He is, we are told, a static character who fails to develop credibly during the decade spanned by the quartet. Worse, Ford is accused of having grossly sentimentalized his central character, presenting him with "partisan hyperbole" and with no ironic detachment.<sup>14</sup> These two charges, separate but related, would, were they to be sustained, certainly weaken Parade's End, if only because of Tietjens' importance to three quarters of the whole design.

The first criticism is perhaps the more difficult to counter because our sense of a fictional character's ability to develop in believable ways depends so much on our experiences during the lengthy process of actually being immersed in Parade's End. Nevertheless, despite the difficulty of attesting to maturation by means of brief quotation, Christopher's momentary appearance in Last Post surely suggests a lassitude brought on by all the experiences undergone, in war and in peace, since Some Do Not... opened in 1912:

Christopher was at the foot of his Mark's bed. Holding a bicycle and a lump of wood. Aromatic wood: a chunk sawn from a tree. His face was white: his eyes stuck out. Blue pebbles. He gazed at his brother and said:

"Half Groby wall is down. Your bedroom's wrecked. I found your case of sea-birds thrown on a rubble heap".

It was as well that one's services were unforgettable!

Valentine was there, panting as if she had been running. She exclaimed to Christopher:

"You left the prints for Lady Robinson in a jar you gave to Madrat the dealer. How could you? Oh, how could you? How are we going to feed and clothe a child if you do such things?"

He lifted his bicycle wearily round. You could see he was dreadfully weary, the poor devil.<sup>15</sup>

And, even if Last Post is set aside as a flawed postscript, the Tietjens of the last pages of A Man Could Stand Up -, dancing and drinking with his fellow-soldiers in his stripped house, is a different man, more humane and less seignoral, from the traveller on the train in the quartet's opening chapter:

Tietjens only caught the Rye train by running alongside it, pitching his enormous kit-bag through the carriage window and swinging on the footboard. Macmaster reflected that if he had done that, half the station would have been yelling, "Stand away there".

As it was Tietjens, a stationmaster was galloping after him to open the carriage door and grinningly to part:

"Well caught, sir!" for it was a cricketing county.<sup>16</sup>

The physical energy and aristocratic assurance displayed here have, by the time of Last Post, mellowed. At the conclusion Tietjens is forgetful, for perhaps the first time, and accepts Valentine's rebuke for his carelessness in tacit contrition. Moreover the important decisions he makes in the second half of Parade's End - not to return to the Civil Service but to live on his wits as an antique-dealer and smallholder; and to consort publicly with a woman of inferior social status - these could scarcely have been made by the Tietjens of Some Do Not... In thinking about himself, Tietjens is certainly aware of changes of this kind, of having been, as an American

reviewer put it in 1927, "educated and humanized by a war which was not at all sporting".<sup>17</sup>

The second damaging criticism levelled against Tietjens is the alleged lack of any strategy of authorial withdrawal from the hero, of the kind employed with Dowell in The Good Soldier. Ford, in this reading of Parade's End, idolized Christopher Tietjens, projecting onto him his own frustrated aristocratic proclivities. By contrast, a fellow-novelist, Isherwood, argued that Ford in reality didn't much like Tietjens, he and Sylvia providing only "a contrast between two kinds of insanity".<sup>18</sup> Certainly there is some evidence, from outside Parade's End, that Ford's early uncritical enthusiasm for a species of hounded, stiff-lipped Englishmen, such as we met in The Inheritors, The Benefactor, A Call, The New Humpty-Dumpty and Mr. Flaubert, has waned. Thus by the end of 1922 he claimed that he "had arrived at the stage of finding the gentleman an insupportable phenomenon".<sup>19</sup> And yet it's also indisputable that Tietjens was modelled on a man for whom Ford still had an enormous admiration, and that he was intended to voice criticisms of English life, in war and in peace, Ford fully endorsed. "His activities", Ford wrote about Christopher Tietjens, "were most markedly to be in the realm of criticism".<sup>20</sup> Broadly speaking, then, Ford seemed to approve of Tietjens. Indeed he would scarcely have chosen as a focussing, critical consciousness in a work designed for "the obviating of all future wars", a man for whom he lacked any sympathy whatsoever. The teleology of Parade's End necessitated a hero largely, if not absolutely, congenial.

Nevertheless, within this context of general approbation Ford employed a number of means of criticising his own hero, so that it's an oversimplification to view Parade's End as hagiographical. Firstly, several of the other characters in the quartet themselves criticise Tietjens, most cogently Valentine and Sylvia. Thus at the very outset of Some Do Not... Sylvia tells

her mother that her husband has telegraphed her from Rye, "because of that dull display of the English gentleman that I detested. He gives himself the solemn airs of the Foreign Minister, but he's only a youngest son at the best".<sup>21</sup> This criticism is largely just: a gap does exist between Christopher's self-estimate and the actual modesty of his national importance. "The solemn airs" Sylvia speaks of here are in fact part of an unattractive theatricality that Tietjens doesn't cast off until Last Post. Lacking in hypocrisy, he is still a poseur, a man constantly striking attitudes because always aware that an 'audience' may imminently appear. Even his solitariness, as in the hotel at Rye when his heavy drinking is interrupted by Macmaster, is choreographed. This aspect of his arrogance is well conveyed in another hotel scene, this time in Rouen in November 1917, and once more it is the perceptive Sylvia who brings it to our attention:

In the bluish looking-glass, a few minutes before, she had seen the agate-blue eyes of her husband, thirty feet away, over arm-chairs and between the fans of palms. He was standing, holding a riding-whip, looking rather clumsy in the uniform that did not suit him. Rather clumsy and worn out, but completely expressionless! He had looked straight into the reflection of her eyes and then looked away. He moved so that his profile was towards her, and continued gazing motionless at an elk's head that decorated the space of wall above glazed doors giving into the interior of the hotel. The hotel servant approaching him, he had produced a card and had given it to the servant, uttering three words. She saw his lips move in the three words: Mrs. Christopher Tietjens. She said, beneath her breath: "Damn his chivalry! Oh, God damn his chivalry!"<sup>22</sup>



Tietjens' chivalry is so self-regarding that it has become brutal, his courtesy so arid as to be incivility, even when directed towards so peasant a wife as Sylvia. Tellingly, Sylvia's criticisms of her husband's lordly woodenness, "his pompous self-sufficiency" and the fact that "he's so formal that he can't do without all the conventions there are and so truthful he can't use half of them" are observations remarkably similar to Valentine's.<sup>23</sup> Thus in Some Do Not... Tietjens' effulgent Toryism is recorded by Ford alongside Miss Wannon's contempt for what appears to her, as a Suffragette and an admirer of Rosa Luxemburg, intolerable paternalism:

Valentine stopped and said good-naturedly: "But do, for goodness' sake, get it over. I'm sorry I was rude to you. But it is irritating to have to stand like a stuffed rabbit while a man is acting like a regular Admirable Brighton, and cool and collected, with the English country gentleman air and all."

Tietjens winced. The young woman had come a little too near the knuckle of his wife's frequent denunciations of himself.<sup>24</sup> While it is true that Sylvia is usually rendered with hostility by Ford the full contexts in which the above comments are embedded surely imply that we are intended to accept the judgments made by the two women. Ford did not allow Tietjens to pass through the quartet uncorrected: our approbation of him and acceptance of him as a critical voice are modified by the responses of his wife, his mistress and, in Last Post, his French sister-in-law.

In his Dedication to A Man Could Stand Up - Ford had shrewdly anticipated the later critical argument that he was too closely attached to Tietjens. Ford there wrote that Tietjens "like all of us...is neither unprejudiced nor infallible. And you have here his mental reactions and his reflections - which are not, not, NOT presented as those of the author".<sup>25</sup>

The triple emphasis in Ford's letter underlines the author's anxiety that he shouldn't be identified totally with his hero, and yet it is clear that these warnings haven't been heeded by all of his readers. There are perhaps several reasons for this mistaken assumption of a total identity of author with hero. For some readers, there may be an overlap from the known facts and legends of Ford's life: he often seemed to have behaved like Tietjens. More interesting perhaps is the possible influence of The Good Soldier, which is many people's first acquaintance with Ford. There, Dowell's narrative role had been so pervasive that we were hesitant of accepting any character, as it were, 'straight'; allowance had continually to be made for characters' possible refraction by the tale's teller. Parade's End, though, is a different kind of fiction, lacking the filter of a Dowell, and hence we should be more confident of accepting the kind of reservations voiced about its hero by Sylvia and Valentine. Ford's readers, then, may have approached Parade's End expecting a more problematic, ambivalent narrative than the author intended: the quartet isn't surrounded by a cloud of moral obliquity. Familiarity with The Good Soldier and with Conrad's Marlow novels may have made us needlessly suspicious of so direct and explicit a novel as Parade's End.

Irony does exist in Ford's quartet but it is perhaps, in literary terms, more 'Victorian' than 'modernist'. It isn't shaped to persuade us that moral discrimination cannot be exercised, as in Dowell's totally relativist world, but rather is designed, as in the fiction of Dickens and Eliot, to help us see that a character's own view of himself is incomplete. In this way, too, Ford is able to dissociate himself from some of Tietjens' more pronounced eccentricities without undermining that character's value as commentator and censor.<sup>26</sup> And so in A Man Could Stand Up - Ford portrays Christopher as imagining that he has deteriorated because he has accepted responsibility for

his battalion and has even relished the thought of the £250 command pay to which he would thus be entitled:

It was deterioration. He, Tietjens, was crumbling up morally. He had accepted responsibility: he had thought of two hundred and fifty pounds with pleasure: now he was competing with a Cockney-Celtic Prize man. He was reduced to that level....<sup>27</sup>

We understand why the Yorkshire landowner should regard such unexceptionable activities as "deterioration" and "crumbling up morally", but nevertheless we are surely not intended by Ford to agree with Tietjens at this point. Ford doesn't comment explicitly on his hero's self-deception, yet within the context of the whole quartet what are to Tietjens proofs of moral delinquency seen only the indices of moral growth. For all its technical sophistication, the moral universe of Parade's End is a good deal less complex and uncertain than The Good Soldier's.

Irony of this kind certainly depends upon our ability to recognise a moral and narrative structure within the quartet's 850 pages. As with Middlemarch and Anna Karenina, the counter-pointing and contrasts in Parade's End function over a large area, a method deriving ultimately from epic forms. For example, there are two passages in Some Do Not... designed to contrast the two Tietjens brothers, yet they are separated by more than a hundred pages. In the first such scene Christopher is walking home with Valentine and composing an Elgarian celebration of the Sussex countryside in midsummer:

"God's England!" Tietjens exclaimed to himself in high good humour. "Land of Hope and Glory!" - F natural descending to tonic, C major: chord of 6-4, suspension over dominant seventh to common chord of C major.... All absolutely correct! Double-basses, 'cellos, all violins: all woodwind: all brass. Full grand organ:

all stops: special vox humana and key-bugle effect....

Across the counties came the sound of bugles that his father knew.....Pipe exactly right. It must be: pipe of Englishman of good birth: ditto tobacco. Attractive young woman's back. English midday midsummer. Best climate in the world! No day on which man may not go abroad!" Tietjens paused and aimed with his hazel stick an immense blow at a tall spike of yellow mullein with its undecided, furry, glaucous leaves and its undecided, buttony, unripe, lemon-coloured flower. The structure collapsed gracefully, like a woman killed among crinolines!<sup>28</sup>

Extracted from the whole of the quartet, this passage may appear to substantiate the claim that Ford viewed Christopher with too few reservations. When, however, it is juxtaposed with a later episode in the same novel, the dangerous naivety of this Georgian eulogy of the status-quo becomes plain and we are forced to see the limitations of Christopher's being "so innocently and literally a ruling-class younger son".<sup>29</sup> In this corresponding scene it is now August 1917 and the brothers are walking to the War Office on the day before Christopher's return to France. He tells Mark that his bank has made the mistake of 'bouncing' his cheque:

Mark hesitated for a moment. It was to him almost unbelievable that a bank could make a mistake. One of the great banks. The props of England.

They were walking down towards the embankment. With his precious umbrella Mark aimed a violent blow at the railings above the terraces, where whitish figures, bedrabbled by the dim atmosphere, moved like marionettes practising crucifixions.

"By God!" he said, "this is the last of England...."<sup>30</sup>

The identical gestures of the two brothers heighten the contrasts between their views. Mark's pessimism seems closer to the historical realities of social change than Christopher's misplaced confidence. The younger man's celebration in 1912, redolent of Rupert Brooke and Grantchester, has been rendered archaic by Ford's scrupulous attention to the process of development, so accelerated by the war. Later still, in No More Parades, Elgar's composition, "Land of Hope and Glory", is associated by Christopher with "the ceremonial for the disbanding of a Kitchener battalion", with "the end of the show" of social and national confidence:

Don't you see how symbolical it was: the band playing  
'Land of Hope and Glory', and then the adjutant saying  
There will be no more parades?....For there won't. There  
won't, there damn well won't....No more Hope, no more Glory,  
no more parades for you and me any more. Nor for the country...  
Nor for the world, I dare say....None....None....Napoo finny!  
No....more....parades!"<sup>31</sup>

In passages like these the Toryism of Ford's hero is modified by the novelist's scrupulousness as an annalist of his own world. It was W. H. Auden who remarked on the danger of imagining that because Tietjens is an eccentric 'backwoods' Tory, his creator must necessarily be a political reactionary or a social snob. Ford, Auden concludes, "makes it quite clear that World War I was a retribution visited upon Western Europe for the sins and omissions of its ruling class, for which not only they, but also the innocent conscripted millions on both sides must suffer".<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, although Christopher Tietjens can be shown both to develop in Parade's End and as being presented critically by the author, it is still true that Ford did not achieve his historical aims by means of narrowly 'realistic' hero. In an essay on Elizabethan drama, T. S. Eliot distinguished between a character who was "living" and one who was "true to life":

A 'living' character is not necessarily 'true to life'. It is a person whom we can see and hear, whether he be true or false to human nature as we know it. What the creator of character needs is not so much knowledge of motives as keen sensibility; the dramatist need not understand people, but he must be exceptionally aware of them.<sup>33</sup>

Tietjens is surely a character whom most of us can see and hear: he is living. Equally, though, he's not true to life, in the sense that, say, Lt. Geoffrey Skens, hero of Mottram's The Spanish Farm (1924), is. Skens is typical of a young British officer of that class and that period. Tietjens, on the other hand, though credible enough, doesn't possess this kind of sociological representativeness. Both in his self-awareness and in the intractability of his marital life he is in fact atypical, something of a sport, a man who doesn't correspond to any strictly sociological norm. Ford has explained, in It Was the Nightingale, his reasons for creating such a character to be the hero of his anti-war quartet. A man "in lasting tribulation - with a permanent shackle and ball on his leg" was required to lend full weight to what Ford saw as the greatest cruelty of war, that is its unrelenting power to embroil the combatant in distant domestic worries.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, his hero needed to be an officer of great insight so that his criticism of his class and country should both be lucid and capable of



percolating to the top of the war-machine.

Indeed the whole point about Parade's End is that it couldn't have enunciated the criticisms Ford intended had Tietjens been, in the language of his own class, "sound". He had to be victimised, in peace and in war, if Ford was to bring out clearly the cruel injustices of that class at that period; the frequent comparison to Dreyfus is not inapt.<sup>35</sup> Like Hyacinth Robinson in James' Princess Casamassima, Tietjens must be a significant reflection of the complexities of his own society, but neither hero can best fulfil this role by being, in Eliot's phrase, "true to life". Both Hyacinth and Christopher had to be intensely, unusually self-conscious; both had to be uncommonly and largely flawed. In this way, by being larger than, and different from a strictly realistic 'life', they are employed by their creators to canalise and summarise social tensions more comprehensively than could be done by a character as patently life-like and incapable of symbolic insights as Mottram's Skene. James had done this by endowing Hyacinth with "remarkable and complete self-consciousness, and...thorough awareness of the antagonisms of [his] society".<sup>36</sup> The similarities between the two characters cannot be pressed too far - Hyacinth is a tragic figure who dies at the end of the novel - but they are alike in being illustrative of Eliot's useful distinction between the living and the life-like.

An example of how Ford exploits Tietjens' eccentricities can be found in No More Parades. The latter is here in very low water: penniless, physically weak, the pariah of his own class, tormented by his sadistic wife and nursing an apparently hopeless passion. We can say, then, that Ford has 'over-drawn' Tietjens' agonies: that no man would be likely to suffer, let alone survive, such a mass of insoluble problems. And yet the soldiers and officers presented in No More Parades endure in similar kind if not in degree. All of them, in the opening scene in the hut near Rouen, are worried: Tietjens about the

lateness of a draft, others about the purchase price of a laundry, a queer cow at home, a lost pigskin pocket-book. Pte Morgan, whose macabre death so afflicts Tietjens, has a wife in Wales who is deceiving him with a prize-fighter; Sylvia Tietjens is rumoured, falsely as it happens, to be sleeping with General Campion; McKeechie's wife is living in London with an Egyptologist. L/Opl. Girtin is distracted by the need to meet his aged mother, just as Tietjens is exercised by the surprising arrival of his wife in town. In this unit only the quantity of the worries differs from man to man, the quality is common to all:

The evening wore on and on. It astounded Tietjens, looking at one time at his watch, to discover that it was only 21 hrs. 19. He seemed to have been thinking drowsily of his own affairs for ten hours....For, in the end, these were his own affairs.... Money, women, testamentary bothers. Each of these complications from over the Atlantic and round the world were his own troubles: a world in labour: an army being moved off in the night. Shoved off. Anyhow. And over the top. A lateral section of the world...<sup>37</sup>

Once again, as so frequently in Parade's End, world denotes both the novelist's fictional universe and the real-life world of November 1917. It was surely no coincidence that Ford set this novel in the same month as the Russian Revolution, an event which also assured that there would be "no more parades".

One of Ford's critics has aptly remarked that his picture of Tietjens is exaggerated, but not false.<sup>38</sup> Certainly No More Parades suggests that Ford heightens the problems of the combatant in his picture of Christopher, yet without essentially distorting them. Ford was interested less in writing of the physical atrocities of war than of its psychological terrors, and these

he desired to render as ubiquitous and inescapable. Sylvia Tietjens, a brief, unimpressed spectator of war, saw it as a reptile that moved and moved, under your eyes dissolving, yet always there. As if you should try to follow one diamond of pattern in the coil of an immense snake that was in irrevocable motion....<sup>39</sup>

Christopher's appalling mental derangements are intended to render more clearly this "diamond of pattern"; to express through the quartet's most lucid and tormented figure war's power of total engrossment, its "infinitely spreading welter of pain, going away to an eternal horizon of night..."<sup>40</sup>

Using the example of Don Quixote, Georg Lukacs has shown how a fictional character can be at the same time both fundamentally impossible by naturalistic criteria and yet also historically and artistically typical:

[The ability of great writers to create typical characters and typical situations] consists...in the invention of such characters and situations as are wholly impossible in everyday life, but which are able to reveal the forces and tendencies whose effectiveness is blurred in everyday life at work in the bright light of the highest and purest interaction of contradictions.<sup>41</sup>

Tietjens, too, is a character of this kind, a figure whose very abnormality is paradoxically his typicality. Walter Allen has argued that Joyce's Bloom achieves his representativeness by being so completely mundane and anti-heroic.<sup>42</sup> In almost every particular, Ford's method with Tietjens is the very opposite of Joyce's. There is a point in A Man Who Could Stand Up - where Tietjens, meditating on having the whole destiny of the war in his hands, is rendered in explicitly epic terms:

And at that moment, in the most crucial point of the line of the Army, of the Expeditionary Force, the Allied Forces,

the Empire, the Universe, the Solar-system, they had three hundred and sixty-six men commanded by the last surviving Tory. To face wave on wave of the Enemy.<sup>43</sup>

The echo of the doggerel schoolboys scribble in their textbooks reminds us that this scenario owes more to "Boys Own Paper" than to The Iliad or The Battle of Maldon. Still, even when we have made allowance for the ironic overstatements of Tietjens' well-bred self-aggrandisement, Ford's hero is presented in a radically different way from the apologetic Bloom. And yet, although their approaches are so dissimilar, Joyce and Ford end up by creating heroes who seem in certain essential respects "typical". Thus, although at the beginning of Parade's End Tietjens is so closely attached to the loyalties and customs of his own class, by the end of A Man Who Could Stand Up - he has transcended these class-ties. He has absorbed those elements in his creation that recall Ford's dreams for himself and his love of Marwood and now "stands in some measure for the unrewarded virtues of personal discipline and endurance in soldiers of lower rank that the war and its perpetual expenditure of human valor had taught Ford to respect".<sup>44</sup> Ford didn't mythicise the war as David Jones did in In Parenthesis with its echoes of Anglo-Saxon poetry and Henry V, but a kind of 'monumental' significance came to be attached to Tietjens. He is Ford's epitaph to the same unsung heroes immortalised by Jones, Owen and Rosenberg.

Now it has been argued that this kind of comprehensive, totalising realism, a fiction which includes and moves beyond the documentary

record offered by, say, Mottram's Spanish Farm Trilogy, is "dependent on the possibility of access to the forces of change in a given moment of history".<sup>45</sup> To an extent, the comment is probably applicable to Ford. Certainly the war enabled him, for the first and last time in his career, to participate in a very minor role at the fulcrum of historical change. It's possible to argue, then, for a parallel between the effect of war on Tietjens - the death of Morgan and the injury to Aranjuez, men for whom he feels responsible, teaching him that Tory aloofness is no longer viable - and war's effect on Ford the novelist, humanising him and widening his vision. It is ironic, but scarcely surprising, that the best novel of an artist firmly entrenched in theory against the propagandistic should be the didactic, purposive Parade's End. If war gave Christopher Tietjens "a new vision and a new dedication", it's at least arguable that it had a similar benevolent effect on his creator.<sup>46</sup> And yet against this benefaction has to be set the artistic problems posed by this particular war, the first 'total war' and a radically new experience for European man and the European novelist.

Lionel Stevenson has argued that Parade's End was not so much a pacifist book as an attack on the peculiar features of modern warfare, especially its "negation of the traditional mobility of the profession of arms".<sup>47</sup> Undoubtedly this new immobility, the odd settledness of trench warfare and its lack of any apparent logicity, posed problems to the artist rendering it which had not been met by the author of, say, War and Peace. Walter Benjamin was referring to a similar problem when he remarked on the fall in the value of experience as being one of the effects of the First War on the

mind of western man. The passage, though lengthy, is worth full quotation because it may have a bearing on Ford's artistic problems in Parade's End - particularly in Last Post - and the solution he adopted:

With the First World War a process began to become apparent which has not halted since then. Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent - not richer but poorer in communicable experience? What ten years later was poured out in the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes from hand to mouth. And there was nothing remarkable about that. For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power.

And now Benjamin describes the experiential effects of the war in a series of metaphors strikingly similar to those of Parade's End, which also opens with an elegant journey and closes with a man lying under the clouds:

A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.

Benjamin is arguing here that the war accelerated a process which had begun much earlier and that it effected a crucial diminution in the "communicability of experience". For Lukacs, periods of such sweeping historical change had been viewed as opportunities for the novelist, touchstones against which the depth and clarity of his vision could be measured: this is how he treats the Year of Revolutions in Europe, 1848. Benjamin, on the other hand, seems



to be implying that the war of 1914/1918 was an experience quite dissimilar either in quality or in quantity from any that had preceded it and, moreover, one that posed cybernetic and semantic problems of a totally new kind for the European novelist. The classic novel of Scott, Balzac and Tolstoy had been so deeply committed to experience's communicability, its publicness, to what Benjamin calls "experience that goes from hand to mouth", that a new fictional mode had to be found to render the private madness of the trenches. Such, at any rate, is Benjamin's hypothesis, and it's worth seeing if it corresponds to what Ford was doing in Parade's End. If we accept that classic European novels can be defined as being "questions posed by the novelist about the opportunities for effective action available to a man living in society", how can this fictional form cope with circumstances in which, as Tietjens discovers, the very concept of 'society' is at risk?<sup>49</sup>

Ford's response to the problem of how to treat the "public events of a decade" so revolutionary was the customary recourse to fiction's central perceiving intelligence. Meditating on his next work in December 1922, as soon as he had arrived in southern France, he realizes that he would have to fall back on the old device of a world seen through the eyes of a central observer. The tribulations of the central observer must be sufficient to carry the reader through his observations of the crumbling world.<sup>50</sup>

Already there seems to be a straining incongruity between the chosen narrative mode and the madness of the material to be treated, but Ford's decision at this point, however reluctant, implied that the observer's experiences were of a kind that could be communicated in a basically traditional manner. The rest of Parade's End is shaped according to these specifications. Through the first three parts of the quartet, as far as the end of A Man Could Stand Up - Armistice Day, 1918, Tietjens is the novel's organizing, nodal consciousness.

Thus far, it is a novel of mass action with Tietjens as hub and focus. Christopher himself held that society was organic and in this way the hero's own perceptions, deriving ultimately from Burke, parallel Ford's decision to employ a synthesising observer as his narrative mode.<sup>51</sup> The implication in both cases, Ford's and Tietjens', is that society is comprehensible.

As a result, the bulk of Parade's End has, despite its time-shifts and internal monologues, recognisable points of contact with the classic nineteenth-century novel. Both share a fidelity to the importance of "the great exterior turning points and blows of fate" which Proust, Joyce and Woolf downgrade.<sup>52</sup> Right up to the end of A Man Could Stand Up - Ford still seems confident that events such as the ownership of Groby and the question of the Single Command of the Allied armies may be made to yield "decisive information" about his subject. Until Last Post Ford can design his fiction on the assumption that life has an order. Indeed had Parade's End ended with the Armistice scene in Tietjens' house -

Les petites marionnettes. font! font! font....

On an elephant. A dear, meal-sack elephant.

She was setting out on...

- we should have remarked on its similarity with so many Victorian novels and how they too conclude "with a series of settlements, of new engagements and formal relationships".<sup>53</sup>

But there is of course a sequel, in which Ford relates the aftermath of the war down to June 1920, and in this fourth novel, Last Post, our impression is rather of a correspondence between Parade's End and the quintessential modern novels, say Sons and Lovers or A Portrait of the Artist, which so frequently end "with a man going away on his own, having extricated himself from a dominating situation [the war and Sylvia's hegemony], and found

himself in so doing".<sup>54</sup> In Last Post Ford in fact abandoned narration "through the eyes of a central observer" and substituted several different points of vision. In consequence it is a radically different novel from the three earlier ones, in both style and the privateness of its content, and one that, in the sparsity of its dialogue, seems to exemplify Benjamin's theory of the new poverty of communicable experience. One's impression is that fewer words are spoken aloud in Last Post than in a single chapter of Some Do Not... Instead it is committed to meditation and reminiscence.

Whereas there had existed a sense of contiguity and continuity between the three earlier elements of the quartet, there seems to be a hiatus between these three considered together and the final Last Post. The quartet's incrementality seems to be fractured by Last Post; our reading of this novel entails some kind of revision, reconsideration, of what has preceded it. From the standpoint of Last Post we look back on Some Do Not... as being almost an innocent vision. The effect of the concluding novel is, then, to make anachronistic both the world of the earlier parts of the quartet and, crucially, the novelist's manner of presenting that world, which, in its deployment of a central observer, was so fundamentally 'old-fashioned'. Last Post is, therefore, in a double sense, retrospective. First, obviously, because its characters are engaged almost entirely in the act of retrospection, there being very little action in the present tense. Secondly, because it engages us in a process of looking back over the novel's preceding eight years and of thinking again about the manner in which we viewed the events of those years. The point being made here can perhaps be clarified by reference to another sequence of novels about the war, Arnold Zweig's outstanding German trilogy, A Trilogy of the Transition.<sup>55</sup> Here, in contrast, the final novel, The Crowning of A King, develops and forwards themes established in the earlier volumes - the corrosive effects of Prussian militarism and the need for

solidarity with the masses. Indeed the final chapter takes us up to May 1926 when a general dies just as Germany itself is on the verge of Hitlerism and the national death of the Third Reich. The whole trilogy is, then, cumulative and incremental. Moreover, the final volume is told in the same way as the first, still showing, in Zweig's words, how "personal motives are always combined with the motives of the larger units".<sup>56</sup>

Now Zweig's Marxian phrase is also applicable to the first three parts of Parade's End. Ford too seemed to share the ambition of linking the domestic and the national. Hence we are shown, for example, the reverberations of the political issue of the Single Command on the private lives of Campion and Tietjens. Everything, before Last Post, is linked with everything else, "each phenomenon shows the polyphony of many components, the intertwining of the individual and social, of the physical and the psychical, of private interest and public affairs".<sup>57</sup> In both content and style the bulk of Parade's End invites comparison with the great models of European realism from the previous century, with Comedie Humaine, Middlemarch and War and Peace. And it is because of these assumptions and models that we read the pastoral, subjective Last Post with such an accession of shock and of altered perspective. From the vantage-point provided by Last Post we come to see that Parade's End is not only about the derangements in the social fabric caused by the war. It's also concerned with changes in seeing and in rendering the world between 1912 and 1920. Its "profound imaginative grasp of the effect of the war on the traditional patterns of English life" thus embraces both patterns of essence as of existence, modes of vision as of action.<sup>58</sup> Ford seems to have grasped that the war's most permanent legacy, aside from its physical destructiveness, lay in altering the forms in which man saw, arranged and communicated his own experiences. It was to this innovation that Ambrose Gordon, in the most eccentric and provocative study of Parade's End, was

pointing when he wrote that it

is a great slow novel of change: social, psychological, normative. Above all, it is a novel of qualitative change, a change in the way of seeing things, brought on by - or through - the First World War.<sup>59</sup>

Thus if one argues that Parade's End widens the application of the modernist techniques of The Good Soldier to make them capable of rendering a larger, public domain of cultural mutations, it's surely also true that the Tietjens novels demonstrate Ford's awareness of the inadequacy of earlier realistic models in treating the new privatisation of experience. Last Post shouldn't, then, be read as a betrayal of Ford's stated commitment to the novelist's role as a recorder of his own times. Instead it provides evidence of a widened definition of the historical novel, which will now include reflections on the changing relationship, during the period covered, between fiction and historical forms. The celebrated self-reflexiveness of modernist fictions takes on a wider cultural dimension as the historical, realist novel is enabled to meditate upon its own historicism.

And so Parade's End is a remarkably capacious fiction, successfully embracing the nineteenth-century novel and the post-war novels of sensibility written by Woolf and the moderns.<sup>60</sup> To place it fairly and squarely within either genre would oversimplify and diminish it. The quartet's proper home is at the point of historical confluence, for it

combines two aesthetics, one drawing on the epicality of nineteenth-century fiction, the other drawing on the crafts of modernism; and it therefore succeeds in carrying a public theme...and a private theme...side by side. The novel is both a social and a psychological history, concerning both the world external to the individual and the individual's

assimilation of event and process.<sup>61</sup>

Locating the novel at the watershed, literary and social, of our own pre-history, when the 'past' was modulating into the recognisably 'present', imputes no act of indecisiveness or artistic cowardice to its creator. Indeed Malcolm Bradbury goes on to make the point that Parade's End deals so fully with history as to explain the conditions that bring about the authorial remoteness and Tietjens' withdrawal in Last Post. Such is Ford's fidelity to the historical realities of the decade spanned by Parade's End that he shows through the changing form of the quartet the historical genesis of modernism itself.

This aspect of Parade's End has been documented most fully in an essay by James Heldman which provides a detailed exploration of the relationship between style and content.<sup>62</sup> Heldman perceives that the changing techniques of Parade's End, from the "omniscient" narrative predominant in Some Do Not... through "objective" and "focussed" narratives to the "interior" narrative of Last Post, all these correspond to the substantive theme of the series as a whole. Thus Tietjens' journey from "a vestigial sense of community to isolation" is both communicated by, and reflected in these four distinct "points of view". Heldman concludes that "as Christopher Tietjens becomes a twentieth-century man, Parade's End is a Victorian novel which becomes a modern novel, and in this becoming has its essential modernity". Parade's End, in this reading, dramatizes a modulation that is at once historical and literary, "the movement of both society and the novel from the nineteenth to the twentieth century".<sup>63</sup> To Mizener's earlier comment - that "the essential subject of Parade's End is the inner process by which Christopher and Valentine are gradually transformed from Edwardian to modern people" - we must add that the tetralogy reflects on the fictional forms available for delineating that transformation.<sup>64</sup> This was unmistakably an enormously



ambitious project, the largest of Ford's career and as massive as any of his grandfather's civic murals.

Some Do Not... (1924), the first novel of the quartet, is Ford's most striking success in Parade's End. Polyphonic, it is a sustained linking of domestic and national derangements, and its insight into the political reverberations of a misdirected, diseased eroticism invites comparison only with The Boyist, a novel modern before its time, and the best work of D. H. Lawrence. Some Do Not... is embedded in our memories as a treatment of 'Edwardian' England, though when we return to it we find that only Part One takes place before the War, in June 1912, Part Two in fact being set towards the end of the War, in August 1917. Nevertheless, although it may be strictly inexact to describe Some Do Not... as a fictional record of 'Edwardianism', Ford apparently intended that we should not be conscious of August 1914 marking the great division between 'peace' and 'war' and the end of the 'Edwardian' age.<sup>65</sup> Certainly the first reviewers of the novel share with later critics a readiness to accept the accuracy of Ford's own periodisation, which implies that many of the forms commonly held to be 'Edwardian' survived after the outbreak of war and, equally, that some aspects of the war were apparent before the hostilities began - indeed as early as 1912. It is, then, very interesting that a reviewer in 1924 described Some Do Not... as "a composite picture of the sign age" and three other reviewers called it a contemporary Vanity Fair.<sup>66</sup>

This is no less suggestive than if a later novelist had extended the period we think of as "the thirties" as far as 1942. And yet although Ford was sometimes, to his disadvantage, guilty of a certain recklessness towards historical fact, in this case he was sharing with his contemporary, Lawrence, the important intuition that war was, for a while, only a continuation of peace. Hence in Kangaroo Lawrence places the great change that took place in England in 1915/1916, not in August 1914, and in his short stories of

this period, in "The Ladybird", "The Fox" and "The Captain's Doll", we find similarly that 'Edwardianism' has survived into the period of hostilities. Likewise, the real stylistic and thematic division in the quartet takes place in November 1917, at the opening of No More Parades with Ford's first description of Tietjens' life in France, even though he had enlisted during the period treated in the earlier novel and had in fact been recuperating from a war wound in Part Two of Some Do Not...

Equally suggestive of Ford's refusal to accept the conventional periodisation, by which the 'Edwardian Age' came to an end in August 1914, is the concluding line of Part One of Some Do Not... - "The knacker's cart lumbered round the corner." Here Ford suggests that the arrival of the man from the shambles to collect Mrs. Wannon's horse, slaughtered by General Campion's maladroit driving, is an anticipation of the carnage to come. It's as if Ford's characters were, in June 1912, already experiencing a taste of the insane violence of 1914. The sacrifice of lineality in jumping straight from June 1912 and the motor accident to August 1917 and Tietjens' imminent return to the battlefield permits Ford to establish the utility of his own historical impressionism as a means of demarcating the felt boundaries between peace and war, and the collapse of 'Edwardian' stabilities. In this way Ford extended the modernist techniques of The Good Soldier, time-shift and the non-sequential narrative, so as to make them capable of dealing with a subject-matter previously only amenable to strictly realistic treatment. John McCormick was referring to such an enlargement of fictional range when he identified Ford as "one of the first novelists to realize the possibilities of the cognitive novel, of the inseparable interaction between the purely technical devices at the writer's command and that external history which makes up an important part of his materials".<sup>67</sup>

Some Do Not... portrays the moral universe of discrete individualism undergoing its death-throes. By the beginning of the quartet's second novel it will have totally collapsed.<sup>68</sup> At the moment it is still just possible, however, to establish clear moral distinctions and the novel's binary form corresponds precisely to such discriminations. The novel is built around the moralistic phrase which forms its title and which Macmaster quotes in the first chapter:

"The gods to each ascribe a differing lot:

Some enter at the portal. Some do not!"

Indeed every single character and episode in Some Do Not... falls into one of these two categories. The two distinct clusters of moral attitudes so established perhaps correspond to the actual polarisation of English political and social life in the years immediately prior to the war, for "at that date there was in politics a phase of bitter social feud between the parties: a condition that had not till lately been characteristic of English political life".<sup>69</sup>

In Part One Tietjens is still accepted by the ruling classes as a dinner-guest and golf-partner, but his physical isolation of Part Two is foreshadowed in 1912 by the continual contrasts between his code of sexual restraint and social integrity, and high society's frequent delinquencies. Thus Tietjens' convention of "monogamy and chastity", to which he adheres in his dealings with Valentine Wannop, is betrayed by the sexual hypocrisies of Edith Duchemin and Vincent Macmaster; by the ramrod indiscipline of Sylvia and her mother; by the businessmen's erotic fantasies about Budapest and their attack on the Suffragette, Gertie; and by Sandbach's motorised safari against the feminists. Christopher's "complete taciturnity" during an emotional crisis with Sylvia is set against the sexual hysteria of Rev. Duchemin; the "honour" of his conduct with Sylvia and Valentine against the squalid

philandering of Sandbach and Macmaster; the physical restraint of the Wannops and Tietjens, lunching frugally, against the extravagance of Duchemin, ordering caviar on ice to be sent by train to Sussex for breakfast. Finally, Christopher's mastery over his horses is twice contrasted with Campion's lack of control over his motor, Valentine's constructiveness with the destructiveness of Sylvia.

Some Do Not... thus makes a long list of charges against the 'Edwardian' ruling-classes, with Ford more than once drawing out the connections between their lack of emotional stability and the approaching war.<sup>70</sup> A sharp dramatic irony is felt throughout the novel. The "twenty tea-trays" which are Campion's lethal motor-car will in the next novel be metamorphosised into the German shelling of Tietjens' unit. The extravagant silver service of the Duchemins will be conjured into the "candlestick", a metal bar inside a shrapnel shell, which is to destroy Pte. Morgan. Ford's attack on England's rulers is sharp enough, and yet we are also meant to see, surely, that although Tietjens' values are superior, even they are somehow incomplete and inauthentic. Valentine makes this point to him when she remarks on the falsity of his Tory paternalism, and how he is a generous man despite his code. Some Do Not... was set at the same period as the conclusion of The Good Soldier and it returns us to Powell's persistent question in that novel: "acting - or, no, not acting?"<sup>71</sup> Just as the railway carriage described on the opening page seems theatrical, stylised and over-perfect - a more appropriate surrounding for that doomed bourgeoisie was Mrs. Duchemin's overheated breakfast-room or Mrs. Satterthwaite's macabre hotel-room - so, similarly, does Tietjens' code appear to spring from a straining will imposing itself on a recalcitrant reality. Rita Kasher's comment that Some Do Not's world is one "in which the forms of gentility and the substance of gentility are at odds", that it is a "triumph of form over fact", is as applicable to Tietjens as to any

other character in the novel.<sup>72</sup> Ford's narrative in Some Do Not... is sufficiently flexible to permit us to see that the novel's binary moral distinctions are themselves the product of his hero's oversimplified view of reality. The function of Valentine is to demonstrate that, for all its superiority to what surrounds him, Tietjens' aristocratic idealism is itself in need of modification. Through the eyes of this perceptive woman we are shown that Tietjens' persistent evocations of the past weaken his code's viability in the present.

In Part Two of Some Do Not... the falsity inherent in Christopher's membership of a corrupt society has reached a critical point, yet the war, now in its third year, has not manufactured such social contradictions, only intensified those already in existence. Ford himself remarks authorially that "it is, in fact, asking for trouble if you are more altruist than the society that surrounds you" and by this time, August 1917, Christopher has cast himself loose.<sup>73</sup> All contacts have now been broken. He has resigned from his office, protesting against the falsification of statistics to cheat the French; he lives with his wife in virtual silence, the marriage finally collapsing on the eve of his return to France; his bank returns his cheque for a few shillings; he is alienated from his father and brother, who both believe the slanders in circulation about his immorality; Edith and Vincent Macmaster have disowned him; and finally the Army distrusts him for his excessive sympathies with both the French and the Germans. Valentine, too, is strained and alone, now that she has broken with the unscrupulous, self-seeking Macmasters, and walks to the War Office prepared to become Tietjens' mistress. In Part One our view of the world had been confined to Christopher's perspective. Now, the narrative of Some Do Not... is widened to embrace the consciousness of both Tietjens and Miss Wammop, Ford's intention being to heighten our sense of their isolation and reliance upon each other.<sup>74</sup> We



wait to see whether they will seal this commitment through physical union before Christopher leaves England, but although he recognises that there is no place for him now in established circles he elects to pledge themselves instead with a talismanic parchment. Tietjens is shown as loathing his own class, but as yet his "parade" of self-suppression and renunciation prevents him from throwing in his lot with Valentine. Hence he persists in "acting", as Dowell put it, his stubborn nobility being no substitute for the necessity to align himself with Miss Warrup.

The contrast at the very beginning of No More Parades (1925) is overpowering, the first scene in the crowded hut near Mons exemplifying Keith Douglas' phrase about the "obsolescence of the gentleman in war".<sup>75</sup> This, Douglas maintained, together with "the retreat from Mons, the aggregate of new horrors, [and] the muddling generalship...demanded and obtained a new type of writing to comment on them". The title of the quartet's second volume is intended to suggest through the resonance of metaphor the collapse of all "parades", all those social rituals by which a governing class reassured itself of its hegemony. Between the end of Some Do Not... and the beginning of No More Parades the old world, sustained by social, military and sexual "parade", had disintegrated, and the new world required, as Douglas, along with Owen and Rosenberg, perceived, "a new type of writing" for its expression. Ford responded to this demand. The opening two paragraphs of No More Parades, describing the hut behind the lines, may usefully be contrasted with the stateliness, in manner as in matter, of the quartet's first paragraph and the railway carriage of Some Do Not...

This is the first page of No More Parades:

When you came in, the space was desultory, rectangular, warm after the drip of the winter night, and transfused with a brown-orange dust that was light. It was shaped like the house a child draws. Three groups of brown limbs spotted with brass took dim high-lights from shafts that came from a bucket pierced with holes, filled with incandescent coals and covered in with a sheet of iron in the shape of a tunnel. Two men, as if hierarchically smaller, crouched on the floor beside the brazier; four, two at each end of the hut, drooped over tables in attitudes of extreme indifference. From the eaves above the parallelogram of black that was the doorway

fell intermittent drippings of collected moisture, persistent, with glasslike intervals of musical sound. The two men squatting on their heels over the brazier - they had been miners - began to talk in a low sing-song of dialect, hardly audible. It went on and on, monotonously, without animation. It was as if one told the other long, long stories to which his companion manifested his comprehension or sympathy with animal grunts...

An immense tea-tray, august, its voice filling the black circle of the horizon, thundered to the ground. Numerous pieces of sheet-iron said, "Pack. Pack. Pack". In a minute the clay floor of the hut shook, the drums of ears were pressed inwards, solid noise showered about the universe, enormous echoes pushed these men - to the right, to the left, or down towards the tables - and crackling like that of flames among vast underwood became the settled condition of the night. Catching the light from the brazier as the head leaned over, the lips of one of the two men on the floor were incredibly red and full and went on talking and talking....<sup>76</sup>

From this we know that a crucially important development has taken place since the end of Some Do Not..... In part, the setting and the characters themselves are quite dissimilar: the crudeness of the hut's furnishings and Tietjens' closeness to two ex-miners have no parallel with anything in the earlier novel. Perhaps more important, however, is the alteration we perceive in the style of this passage, the new manner in which people and places are now being viewed. Looking back to the opening of Parade's End, as Tietjens and Macmaster travel from Victoria to Ashford, we can now see that their carriage was described in a series of associations with a world, stable and unquestioned, that both surrounded the carriage and, in a sense, nurtured it.<sup>77</sup> The three images that impinged on Tietjens' mind - of the German designer of the carriage's upholstery,

of British 'gilt' as a simile for the train's reliability, and of a letter to The Times should the train unexpectedly jolt - all imply the existence of class - and national-harmony. The very externality of these three pictures implies a community of experience and response between character, author and reader: a world is being shared by virtue of the paragraph's lucidity and anthropomorphism.

The hut near Rouen, however, is not presented in anything like the same way. Once again the perceiving consciousness, the point of view, is Tietjens', but he now responds to his surroundings privately and subjectively, noting the pattern of shapes, sounds and colours whose only reality lies within the mind of the beholder. The "minute dragon pattern" of the pre-war upholstery would have existed without Tietjens' presence. "The parallelogram of black that was the doorway" is, however, only Tietjens' response, his impression, and there is nothing external to him by which we can verify this image. In Some Do Not... Man had built his environment; Nature had been harnessed and Man was in control. Now, though, in No More Parades, homo sapiens has shrunk and has no rational power over his surroundings. The railway carriage had been "perfectly appointed"; the hut's space is "desultory", illogical, arbitrary. The frontiers between the individual, nature and reason seem to have been obliterated. Nobody in No More Parades (which is all set in France) seems to have any space or time. Campion the General, Sylvia the civilian, Tietjens the young officer, the unidentified Privates, all are living crowded, hurried and stressful lives. At one stage, typically, Tietjens is writing a sonnet for MacKeechie, talking to Lt. Hotchkiss, thinking of Sylvia, and listening to Sgt. Major Cowley. "Catching the light from the brasier as the head leaned over" is a phrase that leaves us uncertain as to whether the "head" is the soldier's or the brasier's. Soldiers' "thrown limbs", as in a Picasso or Braque, seem to have been separated from their trunks. Man's humanity, even his organicism, is perpetually jeopardised.

"The world was foundering" Tietjens thinks at one moment in No More Parades.<sup>78</sup> Henri Barbusse's response to this same experience was the horrifying realism of Le Feu (1916), but Parade's End infrequently arouses physical disgust - perhaps only with Morgan's death and Aranjuez' loss of an eye. Ford's repudiation of realism, after having employed it frequently in Some Do Not..., was an equally effective expression of the horror of war and his vision of the new world remarked upon by Walter Benjamin. Realism is the register of a world in which the boundaries between Man and his organic and inorganic environment are clear and non-problematic. Christopher's inability to perceive his situation in November 1917 'realistically', and his adoption instead of the impressionism exemplified in the paragraphs above are themselves sufficient evidence of the impotence of his old code. In Some Do Not... he had "adopted a habit of behaviour that he considered to be the best in the world for the normal life", while also admitting that his "peculiarly English habit of self-suppression in matters of the emotions puts the Englishman at a great disadvantage in moments of unusual stresses".<sup>79</sup> Between 1912 and 1917 we saw Tietjens' success at reordering the world to make it fit his own views. Now, his parade of Tory rectitude has no place in an environment perpetually full of "unusual stresses". After the inferno of unremitting mental pressure described in No More Parades Tietjens has a luminous vision. During Campion's inspection of his cockhouse the General orders the pepper canisters to be opened:

To Tietjens this was like the sudden bursting out of the regimental quickstep, as after a funeral with military honours the band and drums march away, back to barracks.<sup>80</sup>

There will be for him no more "parades" of renunciation and self-suppression. The war, which he has only been able to apprehend and communicate through the subjectivity of his own impressions, has taught him the value of the individual's claims. Seeing his draft as individuals,

Each man a man with a backbone, knees, breeches, braces, a rifle, a home, passions, fornications, drunks, pals, some scheme of the universe, corns, inherited diseases, a green-grocer's business, a milk-walk, a paper-stall, brats, a slut of a wife...<sup>81</sup>

enables Tietjens to recognise that his future allegiance must be to his own needs and not to any anachronistic, abstract code. The experience of shared suffering has taught him to see that his obsessive fidelity to what he calls his "public school's ethical system" has been "adolescent".<sup>82</sup> In this way Ford elucidates the historical links between Parade's End and the earlier Good Soldier, marking the point when the "acting" had to stop. As Hugh Kenner has noted, the latter "plus all that the War implied gives us Parade's End: immensely complex personal misery plus the shattering of all the externals of the order that had sustained the poise of gentlemen".<sup>83</sup>

Parade's End is a novel acutely sensitive to changes in class-consciousness, the ways people apprehended themselves and each other as well as objective political developments, between 1912 and 1920. Some Do Not... and No More Parades, the first two segments of Ford's historical record, convey his impression of the different phases in these changes. Their unique value as an account of the "revolution in the British social structure" lies in Ford's deployment of "style as vision", a congruity between the objective historical movements - from certitude to agnosticism, peace to war - and the manner in which such developments were perceived in, and mediated through, a 'typical' human consciousness.<sup>84</sup> The sustained realism of Le Feu, The Spanish Farm Trilogy and Zweig's Trilogy bore witness, in French, English and German, to modulations of the first kind. Ford's use of a much wider range of techniques, especially his deployment of The Good Soldier's modernist forms, enables him to show us, from the inside as it were, why the changes in the way in which Tietjens perceived events inevitably entailed the hero's abandonment of his adherence to "parade".



Tietjens' authentic and untheatrical sense of human community is born in No More Parades out of his relationship with Pte. Morgan and the Canadian, I/Opl. Girtin. With her usual perspicience, Sylvia grasps the implications, which are social and in the widest sense political, of war as the great leveller. She hates the democratisation of which her husband is a part, that now he will speak to anyone, irrespective of class or nationality, and that he, before so marvellous, is tormented by the death of "one single man", O9 Morgan, a former miner:

She had never seen Tietjens put his head together with any soul before: he was the brawny buffalo... Now! Anyone: any fatuous staff officer, whom at home he would never so much as have spoken to: any trustworthy, beer-soaked sergeant, any street-urchin dressed up as orderly....<sup>85</sup>

The quartet's third volume, A Man Could Stand Up - (1926), shows us Tietjens applying what he has learnt of his kinship with the unprivileged to his own life as a soldier and as a lover. Divided into three Parts, Part One presents Valentine's uncertainty on Armistice Day, November 11th 1918, as to Tietjens' feelings for her: does his failure to send her even a postcard from the war signal that their pledge is broken? Part Two, Christopher's experience under fire seven months earlier, when the Germans threatened a crucial breakthrough, both answers Valentine's questions - for plainly he is obsessed with her - and explains his later decision to join her in Part Three, a few hours after the Armistice. Once again, Ford's formal dispositions, the juxtaposition of Valentine's thoughts in the first moments of peace with Christopher's experiences during the nadir of the war, the point-of-view being divided between the civilian P. E. teacher and the young officer, bring home the new power of total war to spill over into the lives of non-combatants.

Another noteworthy aspect of the form of A Man Could Stand Up - is that we now find revealed a close correspondence between fiction's elapsed time and time taken by us, the readers, to follow those same events and thoughts. With each succeeding novel in the quartet a shorter period has been 'covered' and, assuming that our reading speed is approximately constant throughout the four novels, this means a continually altering relationship between 'real' time and fictive time.<sup>86</sup> (We can see a similar change occurring between Joyce's slim Portrait of the Artist with its account of the events of many years and the weighty Ulysses, in which fictive time is limited, classically, to the doings of only 24 hours.) In Some Do Not... five years elapse, in No More Parades two days. Now, in A Man Could Stand Up -, there's a rough parity between the two kinds of time, the characters' experiences and our reading of them. When we reach the final novel, Last Post, real time is probably longer than fictive time. The point of closest correspondence between art's time and life's time occurs in Part Two of A Man Could Stand Up - where Section One opens (on page 46) some 45 minutes before the German barrage is expected, this attack beginning in II, iv, on page 102. Fifty-six pages, then, describe Tietjens' thoughts and actions during these 45 minutes. The wider significance of Ford's juggling with these two varieties of time - one a *donnée*, the other created by the writer himself - is that it underlines the removal of authenticity from the public world and its lodgment instead in the private and the subjective. Thus whereas in Some Do Not... we, along with the characters, had been encouraged to locate human value in a matrix of public events, now in A Man Could Stand Up - the external world can offer no touchstone to either Christopher or Valentine. They find themselves within themselves.

Such self-discovery is indeed the theme of A Man Could Stand Up -, as Tietjens and Miss Wammop attempt to discover how, in the words of the former's sergeant, "a man could stand hup on an 'ill'".<sup>87</sup> Both are seeking to free

themselves from conventions largely discredited by all the events, sexual and martial, that have taken place since first they walked together in June 1912. For Valentine imprisonment lies in the morality of her Headmistress, Miss Vanostrocht, urging her to continue chaste and self-suppressingly "nunlike". Liberation is gained through her decision to spend Armistice Day with Tietjens, who is discredited socially and may well also be deranged. For Tietjens himself, a point of decision had been reached earlier, in April 1918, when he was faced with the breakdown of his superior, the bibulous Colonel Mill. (In the chronology of these two personal crises Ford exemplifies war's power of accelerating, for the combatant, problems which the civilian only has to face at the conclusion of hostilities.) Tietjens' pre-war code had urged upon him self-effacement. Will he now, in his C. O.'s enforced absence, have the courage to accept the "moral responsibility" of command? <sup>88</sup> Like Valentine, who will accept personal responsibility for her own life, Christopher, toughened by what he has learnt in No More Parades, succeeds in asserting himself, having abandoned his fidelity to all the Tory "parade" of renunciation. A crucial element in this decision is his feeling of comradeship with the rest of the unit, which had so disgusted Sylvia:

He was bound to do his best for that unit. That poor b---y unit. And for the poor b---y knock-about comedians to whom he had lately promised tickets for Drury Lane at Christmas....

An immense sense of those grimy, shuffling, grouching, dirty-nosed pantomime-supers came over him and an intense desire to give them a bit of luck.... <sup>89</sup>

With the British Army threatened by a massive German advance, Tietjens assumes command.

The counterpart of Tietjens' new self-confidence as an officer is his firm decision to try to win Miss Wansley as soon as the war is over. His

"passionate desire to command that battalion" is as strong as his need for Valentine's companionship. His military obsession with the lines of communication between units corresponds to his love of her clarity, her "exact mind,... impatience of solecisms and facile generalizations".<sup>90</sup> Tietjens' assumption of command has its counterpart in his decision to abdicate from Groby and live with Valentine. They will "stand up" together, asserting the independence of their lives from restricting and discredited mores. Just as isolation in London has matured Valentine, so for Christopher

The war had made a man of him! It had coarsened him and hardened him. There was no other way to look at it. It had made him reach a point at which he would no longer stand unbearable things...today the world changed. Feudalism was finished; its last vestiges were gone. It held no place for him.<sup>91</sup>

As so often in Parade's End, moments of personal insight are accompanied by understanding of the wider contexts of individual decisions. Tietjens records this change in his own life and its accordance with the developments in the "world" outside him and of which he is also a part.

Throughout Parade's End we find Ford investing his modernist techniques with an historical significance of this kind. Typical is Ford's highly impressionistic rendering of the incident in which Tietjens is entombed with L/Cpl. Duckett. The latter's interest for Christopher lies in his uncanny physical likeness to Valentine, and their being buried together, by an accident of war, assumes a kind of symbolic reverberation. Here is how Ford narrates that episode, seen through Tietjens' eyes:

He was looking at Aranjuez from a considerable height. He was enjoying a considerable view. Aranjuez's face had a rapt expression - like that of a man composing poetry. Long dollops of liquid mud surrounded them in the air, like black pancakes

being tossed. He thought: "Thank God I did not write to her. We are being blown up!" The earth turned like a weary hippopotamus. It settled down slowly over the face of Lance-Corporal Duckett, who lay on his side, and went on in a slow wave.

It was slow, slow, slow...like a slowed-down movie. The earth manoeuvred for an infinite time. He remained suspended in space. As if he were suspended as he had wanted to be in front of that corncomb in whitewash. Coincidence! <sup>92</sup>

Ford's impressionism is here engaged in rendering the sensations of a man shot into the air and then buried under a mound of liquid earth. So strikingly successful is the passage that it seems to take on an almost parabolic importance, with Tietjens' rescue of himself, followed by his assistance in retrieving L/Cpl. Duckett, a military version of what happens in private life to Valentine and Tietjens. In this case, too, Tietjens first frees himself from a choking social incubus before assisting Valentine in her liberation. Ford's language here is operating on two levels: to offer an impression of an incident from the war that will also do duty as a heightened summary of a lengthy psychological development. Yet again war is seen in the quartet neither as a glorious transcendence nor as a bestial degradation of normality. It is, rather, an intensification and a clarification of certain human traits also visible in peacetime.

The title of the concluding Last Post (1928) alludes to the farewell buglecall sounded at the end of military funerals, the latter being representative of that eponymous "parade" of misplaced loyalties Tietjens and Valentine discarded on Armistice Day. It stands apart from the rest of the Tietjens series in that its right to inclusion in Parade's End is by no means unquestioned, whereas the three earlier novels are patently unitary. Indeed its most extreme critics argue for its exclusion from the series and would refuse it even a conditional entry: Graham Greene, editor of the Bodley Head collection, is the most celebrated of this company. The arguments advanced against Last Post certainly merit the most careful consideration, though we may finally want to align ourselves with Ford himself, the balance of his comments weighing in favour of a four-part structure for Parade's End.<sup>93</sup>

Samuel Hynes, one of the shrewdest of Ford's critics, maintained that the real argument against the inclusion of Last Post is that it is "unhistorical", whereas the rest of Parade's End is a faithful cultural record. Ford there strayed out of history into a timeless "pastoral romance".<sup>94</sup> Stopping some way short of outright expulsion, Hynes maintained that Last Post should be regarded as a kind of 'optional extra', an accessory that the frugal reader could refuse to pay for. In the most narrow and literal sense Hynes is right: Last Post does lack that visible structure of a verifiable and public reality. Nevertheless, in the larger view, the very lack of this external historical form is paradoxically evidence of its fundamental fidelity to historicism. This assuredly was the nub of Professor Bradbury's observation that Parade's End treats history so fully that it implicitly explains why Last Post doesn't have the earlier novels' overt commitment to the public world of military or metropolitan politics.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, though we may find ourselves able to



grasp this kind of socio-historical elucidation of Last Post's singularity, we still need to evaluate the degree of literary success achieved by the last novel. Is Last Post an effective rendering of the lives that Tietjens and Valentine had elected to live in A Man Could Stand Up -?

What they did there was, singly and then in unison, choose to move from a 'traditional' to a 'consequential' morality. The former "imposes upon the individual a repetition of similar patterns of behaviour" in obedience to traditional pieties - these are the "parades" which are gradually evacuated of meaning as the quartet progresses. Consequential morality, on the other hand, "involves a detailed study of particular situations, a series of choices which vary according to circumstances".<sup>96</sup> A Man Could Stand Up - didn't promise any relaxation of moral strenuousness for the future. Indeed the new location of moral decision within the individual, instead of in the surrounding rubric of class or sect, would rather imply an intensification in the moral life. And yet it is just this which is noticeable by its absence from Last Post, a novel markedly free of tension, uncertainty and moral conflict. Sylvia's surprise is ours too:

It did not seem possible that Christopher should settle down into tranquil devotion to brother and mistress after the years of emotion she had given him.<sup>97</sup>

Calm somehow seems too easily won in Last Post: aspiration has been elided into achievement.

Paul L. Wiley has attributed part of this problem to Tietjens' "postwar occupation as a furniture dealer which did not altogether represent a sufficiently positive image of his change in personal belief".<sup>98</sup> And yet the change in occupation cannot really explain Last Post's moral enervation: there is no evidence that the private lives of furniture dealers and housewives are any less rich than those of landowning soldiers and school-mistresses.

More significant, perhaps, was the change in location, from the crowded urban settings - and even those wartime scenes in the fields of France were closer to urban than to rural rhythms - to the sparsely-populated Sussex countryside of Last Post. Much of the novel indeed is devoted to recording, as in the passage that follows, the satisfactions available to a self-sufficient smallholder:

She [Marie Leonia] went into the dark, warm, odorous depths of the hen-house-stable shed, the horse box being divided off from the hen half by wire netting, nest-boxes, blankets extended on use-poles. She had to bend down to get into the hen half. The cracks of light between the uprights of the walls blinked at her. She carried the bowl of tepid water gingerly and thrust her hand into the warm hay hollows. The eggs were fever-heat or thereabouts; she turned them and sprinkled in the tepid water; thirteen, fourteen, fourteen, eleven - that hen was a breaker! - and fifteen. She emptied out the tepid water and from other nests took out egg after egg. The acquisition gratified her.<sup>99</sup>

This passage could be mistaken for the work of D. H. Lawrence - Sons and Lovers or even the post-war Lady Chatterley's Lover - but whereas in the best of Lawrence writing of this kind accompanies, or verifies, a full moral life, in Last Post the loving record of these rituals is being pressed into duty as a substitute for the narration of moral struggle. Without any artistic justification in the earlier part of the quartet, actions such as the exercising of an old mare, the cutting of a hedge or the bottling of cider have suddenly been invested with a magic therapeutic value as a cure for the social malaise diagnosed so well earlier. In the attention allocated to them they even threaten to dwarf the major human events of Last Post - Sylvia's visit to Christopher's retreat which leads to her vision and her final decision to

cease tormenting him, and the death of Mark Tietjens. It appears that Ford is asking us to accept that the tensions endemic to the relationship of Christopher and Valentine have been magicked away by their bucolic residence.

The earlier volumes in Parade's End had been built on the contradictions between man-as-individual and man-as-social-being. However, now that Ford, faithful to historical reality, has demonstrated how this contradiction has been erased, he is left with the problem of imparting some significant vitality and purposefulness to the retirement of Christopher and Valentine. There is, it is true, a continuing feud between the Tietjens brothers over Groby, but this struggle is, significantly, silent. Valentine indeed describes it as a "long chess-game" in which the brothers move their 'pieces' silently.<sup>100</sup> In Last Post gesture seems to have replaced the verbalised conflicts of the earlier novels. However, in thus displacing the word and exemplifying Walter Benjamin's "incommunicability of experience", Ford's Last Post was, with very clear historical justification, reaching outwards to the frontiers of fiction itself. How were the nihilistic, 'post-verbal' insights that were the war's legacy - to Christopher and especially to Mark, who had even taken a vow of silence - to be communicated in a medium, fictional prose, so dependent on verbal textures? Certainly they could not be expressed through the device of the central observer, which Ford had employed in the preceding volumes, and so the novelist adopted the strategy of dividing Last Post among several points of view: those of Mark and his wife, Valentine, Sylvia, Christopher's son and, briefly, his employees. The inevitable consequence of Last Post's plurality of vision was a certain diffuseness, the absence of that lucid focal-point provided earlier by Christopher.

Ford, though, was by no means alone during the 'twenties in trying to discover a new fictional structure to replace what the war and its experiential consequences had rendered anachronistic. Indeed this search was perhaps the

overriding problem of that decade's literature:

The feeling of surveying an existence without essence, a continuum without a structure, runs deep in the art of the 1920's<sup>7</sup> and gives it a sense of internal strain - a certain terminal quality in the writing which reveals that it is attempting to reach towards the limits of language, the ultimate possibilities of form, the extreme of an aesthetic order beyond time and history.<sup>101</sup>

The characteristics thus attributed to the literature of this decade are also surely pervasive in Last Post, its artistic imperfections being indistinguishable from its value as a cultural and historical record. Ford's commitment there to values we might now call 'ecological', the need for man to locate his life within natural rhythms which he had attempted to destroy between 1914 and 1918, was an attempt on his part to introduce some meaning into a crashed world. Any disappointment that accompanies our reading of Last Post springs not from a belief that Ford's philosophy was demonstrably mistaken, but from a suspicion that he was, in Lawrence's metaphor, placing his thumb on the balance. In the preceding novels human behaviour, such as Tietjens' psychological revolution, had appeared to emerge naturally from the world the novelist had imagined and set in motion. Now, however, in Last Post, the novelist is imposing, for his own ends, a structure of meaning that has not germinated from the characters and their own lives. It's a strange irony that Ford's philosophy of the "Small Producer", the need for the individual to achieve economic self-sufficiency and independence from large political and commercial forces, should have made the allusive Last Post, not the trenchant Some Do Not..., the most tendentious of the quartet. The epilogue to Parade's End has usually been seen as suffering from a lack of direction. On the contrary, its weakness is rather that, unlike the rest of the series, it is

too nakedly preceptive in its desire to eulogise a way of life that in spirit is closer to Social Credit than to either of the period's extremities, Fascism or Communism. Accompanying this change, and having an unfavourable effect on his fiction, is Ford's increasing reliance, in Last Post and especially in his novels of the 'thirties, on caricature - such as Mrs. de Bray Pape, the wife of an American olive-oil magnate - as a replacement for the reverberant typicality of Christopher and Sylvia Tistjens.

Last Post, then, marks a turning-point in Ford's career. For a decade between 1915 and 1926, with The Good Soldier and the first three parts of Parade's End, he had chosen to "include the barbarity and immerse himself in it". He had submitted to the "destructive element" and had made out of it a handful of major, innovative novels.<sup>102</sup> Now, and for the remainder of his life, he will stand back to condemn it. For this willed isolation a price must be paid.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

- 1 Both the phrase and the illustrations are taken from Barbara Hardy, The Appropriate Form (London, 1964),
- 2 IWN, p. 205.
- 3 Ibid., p. 180. Elsewhere Ford admitted the possible influence on FE of Marcel Proust, though he claimed he hadn't actually read Proust until after finishing AMCSU (NYE, pp. 25/9). Another influence on FE, freely acknowledged by Ford, was Stephen Crane's Red Badge of Courage: NYE, ch. iii; REY, pp. 68 et seq.; MTS, p. 40.
- 4 IWN, pp. 187, 195.
- 5 Ibid., p. 195; MTS, p. 92; IWN, p. 196 (*italics added*), p. 197.
- 6 LP, pp. 309/10 (*emphasis added*). All quotations from FE refer to the New American Library edition (New York, 1964/5). Minner discusses the various texts of FE and argues that this edition offers the most reliable readings (Minner, pp. 586/7).
- 7 Cassell, p. 232, sees her as the representative of a bored, decadent, upper-class 'society'; similarly, Gordon, p. 112. The latter also describes her as a "witch" (ibid., p. 76), and Wiley as a "nemesia", the agent of the cultural, religious disunity in the Tietjens line (Wiley, p. 217). In general, Sylvia is seen as one of the outstanding achievements of FE. Thus Bergonzi notes Ford's "unsurpassed psychological insight" into the relationship of Tietjens and Sylvia, "the beautiful sexual terrorist": Haroon's Twilight (London, 1965), pp. 179, 176. And Christopher Isherwood argues that "Ford's secret sympathy with Sylvia has resulted in one of the most compassionate portraits of a neurotically unhappy woman ever drawn in fiction": Review of Parade's End, Tomorrow, X (November 1950), 53/5, cited in Harvey, p. 446. But cf. John McCormick, Catastrophe and Imagination (London, 1957), p. 219: "Sylvia never loses a theatricality which cheapens the series."
- 8 AMCSU, p. 17 (*later emphases added*). Isherwood argues that Valentine, not Tietjens, is FE's real hero: Harvey, p. 446.
- 9 Cassell, pp. 210/3. Similarly, Basil Bunting has argued in a radio programme on Ford that war is only the background of FE, its real subject being personal relationships: "The Only Uncle of the Gifted Young: A Portrait of Ford Madox Ford," compiled by Tony Gould, and transmitted by the B.B.C. on April 27, 1974. My argument is rather that FE shows why it was, between 1912 and 1922, impossible to distinguish between the private and public worlds.
- 10 George Core, "Ordered Life and the Abysses of Chaos: Parade's End," The Southern Review, VIII, 111 (July 1972), 527.
- 11 J.A.V. Chapple, Documentary and Imaginative Literature 1880-1920 (London, 1970), p. 65.
- 12 Terry Eagleton, Exiles and Emigres: Studies in Modern Literature (London, 1970), pp. 10, fn. 1, and 189.
- 13 Georg Lukacs, The Historical Novel (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 408.



- 14 For some hostile accounts of Tietjens, see: Walter Allen, The English Novel (Harmondsworth, 1958), pp. 331/2; Paul West, The Modern Novel (London, 1963), p. 103; John Farrelly, New Republic, CXXVII (August 11, 1952), 19/20 - "that an intelligence so capable as Ford's of social and political insight should be so without detachment and irony...suggests that the hero of Ford's book was first of all Ford's hero"; Samuel Hynes, "Ford Madox Ford: 'Three Dedicatory Letters to Parade's End' with Commentary and Notes," Modern Fiction Studies, XVI (Winter 1970), 515/28 - "the dissonance that one feels between the romantic hero and his historical world...gives Parade's End its odd, somewhat unfocused quality."
- 15 LF, p. 335.
- 16 SDN, p. 28.
- 17 Clifton P. Fadiman, Review of The Good Soldier, Nation, CXXIV (April 20, 1927), 451/2, cited in Harvey, p. 372. On FE as bildungsroman, see Rita J. Kashner, "Tietjens' Education: Ford Madox Ford's Tetralogy," Critical Quarterly, VIII (Summer 1966), 150/63; Cassell, pp. 205/68.
- 18 Review of Parade's End, Tomorrow, X (November 1950), 53/5, cited in Harvey, pp. 445/6.
- 19 IWN, p. 199.
- 20 Ibid., p. 198.
- 21 SDN, p. 37.
- 22 NMP, p. 386.
- 23 SDN, p. 38.
- 24 Ibid., p. 119.
- 25 AMUSU (Harmondsworth, 1948), p. 12. The various Dedications were not reprinted in the New American Library edition.
- 26 Melvin Seiden has remarked that Tietjens is both a saint and a fool: "Ford Madox Ford and his Tetralogy," London Magazine, VI (August 1959), 45/55. Moreover, "it is one of Ford's greatest achievements to have made us feel, as Sylvia does, that Tietjens' paradoxical virtue is intolerable, and yet to have done this without in the least mitigating her viciousness or suggesting that Tietjens deserves the calumny he receives from her or the world" (Ibid., 49). See further, Melvin Seiden, "Persecution and Paranoia in Parade's End," Criticism, VIII (Summer 1966), 246/61.
- 27 AMUSU, p. 96.
- 28 SDN, p. 111. For Elgar's role in the germination of FE, see Misener, pp. 494/5. The career of Elgar has some general parallels with Ford's. He had a tremendous reputation in his lifetime, then declined, only to surface again in the 1960's. Like the half-German Ford, Elgar was very 'English', "the very model of an Edwardian clubman." Ford's SDN and Elgar's "Cello Concerto" (1919) were two of the earliest attempts to come to terms with 'Edwardianism', the concerto being "more or less a lament, in which we catch Elgar looking back, not merely with nostalgia but often with anguish, at the Edwardian years, gone for ever." Harold C. Schonberg, The Lives of the Great Composers (New York, 1970), pp. 481/7; J. B. Priestley, The Edwardians (London, 1970), p. 138.

- 29 Misener, p. 375.
- 30 SDN, p. 223.
- 31 NMP, p. 311.
- 32 W. H. Auden, "Il Faut Payer," Mid Century, LXII (February 1961), 3/10, cited in Harvey, p. 467.
- 33 The passage is invoked by Dr. Leavis in his essay on Nostramo: The Great Tradition (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 216.
- 34 IWN, p. 189.
- 35 Renee Winegarten, "Ford Madox Ford - Zionist," Midstream, XII (August-September 1966), 72.
- 36 Clinton F. Oliver, "Introduction," The Princess Casanovissa (New York, 1959), p. 19.
- 37 NMP, pp. 326/7 (emphases added).
- 38 Bernard Bergsoni, Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War (London, 1965), p. 177.
- 39 NMP, p. 443.
- 40 Ibid, p. 444.
- 41 Georg Lukacs, "The Intellectual Physiognomy of Literary Characters," Lee Baxandall, ed., Radical Perspectives in the Arts (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 89/141.
- 42 Walter Allen, Tradition and Dream (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 33.
- 43 AMCSU, p. 100.
- 44 Wiley, p. 213.
- 45 Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton, 1971), p. 204; Jameson is attributing this view to Lukacs' reading of Balzac and Tolstoy.
- 46 Cassell, p. 238. One reviewer remarked that PE was Ford's first novel to be composed with passion and intensity, instead of cleverness alone: H. G. Harwood, "Recent Tendencies in English Fiction," Quarterly Review, CCLII (April 1929), 327, cited in Harvey, pp. 382/3.
- 47 Lionel Stevenson, The History of the English Novel (New York, 1967), XI, 85.
- 48 Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt (London 1970), p. 84.
- 49 Jean Duvignaud, The Sociology Of Art (London, 1972), p. 122.
- 50 IWN, p. 195.
- 51 On Tietjens' 'organicism', see Cassell, p. 215.
- 52 Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (Princeton, 1953), p. 547. (emphasis added). On the traditional realism of PE, see further Chapple, op. cit., p. 331.
- 53 Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (London, 1961), p. 286.
- 54 Loc. cit.
- 55 The trilogy's three parts are: Education Before Verdun (Erziehung Vor Verdun) (New York, 1936); The Case of Sergeant Grischka (Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischka) (New York, 1937); and The Crowning of a King (New York, 1938). Verdun was sketched out in 1927, while Ford was writing LP, and first published in the U.S.A. in 1936; Grischka was conceived in 1917, written as a play in 1921, and as a novel in 1926/7.
- 56 The Crowning of a King, p. 417.
- 57 Georg Lukacs, Studies in European Realism (London, 1950), p. 145.

- 58 Bernard Bergsoni, Heroes' Twilight, p. 176.  
 59 Gordon, p. 72.  
 60 Marlene Griffith, "A Double Reading of Parade's End,"  
Modern Fiction Studies, II, 1 (Spring 1963), 25/38.  
 61 Malcolm Bradbury, Possibilities: Essays on the State of the  
Novel (London, 1973), p. 136.  
 62 James M. Melman, "The Last Victorian Novel: Technique and  
 Theme in Parade's End," Twentieth-Century Literature, XVIII  
 (October 1972), 271/8.  
 63 Ibid., 283.  
 64 Miscell., p. 372.  
 65 There is a very interesting comment on the part played by EDN  
 in the creation of 'Edwardianism' in Jerome Thale, "The Making  
 of the Edwardian Age," Mosaic, VII, 11 (Winter 1974), 25/43.  
 66 "A composite picture of the age": Peter Renny, Review of  
Some Do Not..., Golden Hind, II (July 1924), 39. The various  
 allusions to Vanity Fair are noted in Harvey, pp. 345, 348 and 354.  
 67 McCormick, op. cit., p. 220. McCormick argued further that FE  
 was a failed attempt to marry such technical experimentation to  
 social conservatism. Similarly, Geoffrey Wagner claimed that Ford  
 knew all about the cosmos and apocrypha of Edwardian England, but in  
 the last analysis loved England too romantically to stand back from  
 it: "Ford Madox Ford: The Finest Edwardian," Essays in Criticism,  
 XVII (January 1967), 75/88.  
 68 Op. Nicola Chiaromonte's comment on Roger Martin du Gard's  
 Les Thibault in The Paradox of History (London, 1971), p. 62:  
 "At the approach of /the 1914-1918/ war, this moral universe  
 /based on the accord between the individual, reason and nature/,  
 which was already in question as far as the main characters were  
 concerned, begins to shake, and eventually collapses. The frontier  
 between the individual, nature and reason is erased. Nature has  
 swept away the dyke. Reason is no longer of any avail. The  
 individual no longer knows where he stands nor who he is. Society  
 has taken possession of him and carries him away toward an unknown  
 consummation."  
 69 JM, p. 55.  
 70 For example, SON, p. 26. See further, on the connection between  
 sex and war, Canwell, p. 225; Hoffmann, p. 107; Filex, p. 219;  
 and Gerald Levin, "Character and Myth in Ford's Parade's End,"  
Journal of Modern Literature, I, 11 (1970/1), 163/96.  
 Geoffrey Wagner (op. cit., 75) asserts that FE shows the impotence  
 and frustrated homosexuality of the ruling classes, but this scarcely  
 seems to have been the gravamen of Ford's charge.  
 71 See above, Ch. V, p. 120.  
 72 Rita Kashner, "Tietjens' Education: Ford Madox Ford's Tetralogy,"  
Critical Quarterly, VIII (Summer 1966), 150/63.  
 73 SON, p. 211.  
 74 Thus pp. 226/7 give us Christopher's view of their meeting at the  
 War Office, p. 280 the same scene from Valentine's point of view.

- 75 Keith Douglas, "Poets in this War," May 1943 ?  
The Times Literary Supplement, 3608 (April 23, 1971), 478.
- 76 NMP, p. 295.
- 77 The passage is set out in full in Chapter VI, p. 476, above.
- 78 NMP, p. 364.
- 79 SDN, p. 183.
- 80 NMP, p. 504.
- 81 Ibid., p. 301.
- 82 Ibid., p. 494.
- 83 Hugh Kenner, "Remember that I have Remembered," Hudson Review,  
 III (Winter 1951), 602/11, cited in Harvey, p. 448.
- 84 Burton Rascoe, Review of No More Parades, Arts and Decoration,  
 XXIV (February 1926), 57, cited in MacShane, The Critical  
Heritage, p. 100.
- 85 NMP, p. 443.
- 86 Actually many readers would perhaps find the largely realistic  
SDN quicker to read than the more subjective LP.
- 87 AMCSU, p. 72.
- 88 Ibid., p. 88.
- 89 Ibid., pp. 92/3.
- 90 Ibid., pp. 111, 107.
- 91 Ibid., p. 171 (emphasis added).
- 92 Ibid., p. 140.
- 93 Last Post had been in Ford's mind in 1924/5, when, in the Preface  
 to NMP, he had written of his wish to show Tietjens "in process of  
 being re-constructed". Similarly, his AMCSU Preface states  
 unambiguously that a final part is to follow. This is contradicted  
 by his important letter to Pinker of August 1930, in which he also  
 suggested the title Parade's End. Here he stated "I strongly wish  
 to omit the Last Post from the edition. I do not like the book  
 and have never liked it and always /sig/ intended the series to end  
 with A Man Could Stand Up! Letters, ed. Ludwig, pp. 196/7. In  
 an earlier letter, however, of November 1927, he had described LP  
 as "the last of the Tietjens series" (Ibid., p. 174), and five years  
 later, after the disclaimer to Eric Pinker, he is writing about the  
 "Tietjens tetralogy /sig/" (Ibid., p. 208).
- 94 Samuel Hynes, "Ford Madox Ford: Three Dedicatory Letters to  
Parade's End "with Commentary and Notes," Modern Fiction Studies,  
 XVI (Winter 1970), 515/28.
- 95 Malcolm Bradbury, Possibilities, p. 138.
- 96 The terms and definitions are borrowed from C. R. Cox, The Free Spirit  
 (London, 1963), p. 10.
- 97 LP, p. 295.
- 98 Wiley, p. 242.
- 99 LP, p. 197.
- 100 Ibid., p. 319.
- 101 Bradbury, op. cit., p. 90 (emphasis added).
- 102 Malcolm Bradbury, The Social Context of Modern English Literature  
 (Oxford, 1971), p. 97.

Chapter Eight

Ford's Last Novels: 'The Small Producer'

Sadly, the four novels of Ford's last years are beyond reclamation, though his criticism, The English Novel in particular, and his memoirs have retained their claim on our attention, providing evidence of no loss of stamina or acumen: Ford's last book, The March of Literature, was, as Graham Greene noted, positively "Wellsian" in its scope.<sup>1</sup> At one point in this remarkable survey of world literature from Babylon to the present there is a comment by Ford which may offer one clue to the weakness of his fiction in this decade. Discussing the poetry of the mediaeval troubadours and their creation of a substantial body of verse out of the slightest material, Ford digresses to comment upon the wider implications of their achievement. Ford's argument is that the work of these minnesingers approached the ideal of all writers - "absolute imaginative literature, using the word 'absolute' in the sense that it is used by musicians". Without stopping to prove that a vocabulary loosed from the word's anchorage in denotative meaning is in reality the goal of all writers, Ford goes on to comment in terms that are plainly personal, claiming that

if you could read the secrets of the hearts of writers, you would find that every one of them in the end, in the spirit either of weariness or of aversion, craves enormously to write versified or cadenced words that shall have beauty and be almost without significance. You get tired of having to tell stories or to treat of subjects; the thought of words set in due order and of unchanging meaning seems to you intolerably fatiguing. You long to express yourself by means of pure sound as the musician



can impress you and as nothing else can impress you, by a fugue that consists of nothing but notes. The one follows and mingles with the other but the whole has no meaning whatever. It depends solely on those sounds to influence your moods of the moment or such of your deeper emotions as may permanently affect your disposition.<sup>2</sup>

Ford then finds a modern example of this quasi-musical technique in James Joyce, the true inheritor of the troubadours, "whose content is of relatively little importance, the excitement in reading him coming almost entirely from his skill in juggling words as a juggler will play with many gilt balls at once".<sup>3</sup>

Ford's argument has an obvious connection with his own career over the preceding forty years, the novelist's devotion to "stories" and "subjects" having reached its point of fullest expression in Parade's End. In 1927, when he wrote that excellent critical survey, The English Novel, Ford had been faithful to the novel's "significance" and lineality, to fiction's importance as a mentor, remarking that it was the novelist's aim to give his reader "a better view of the complicated predicaments that surround him".<sup>4</sup> Indeed in this first chapter of The English Novel, entitled significantly "Function", Ford had been at pains to stress fiction's social utility as the only medium for showing us life whole. Thus in 1927 Ford's concern had been the novel's contiguity with historical and sociological modes, whereas his later comment in The March of Literature was to align it with the non-verbal form of music.

Patently there was an important shift in Ford's thinking about the craft of fiction during the last decade of his life, and the results of this revaluation were discernible in the four novels he published during this period: The Bashful and Money for Nothing, the first two volumes of a proposed trilogy; When the Wicked Man; and Viva Le Roy. In all four works Ford is much less concerned with the verisimilitude derived from a tight plot



and the delineation of firm characters amidst a coherent setting. And, as setting and characterisation become less stable, so elements of myth and romance, themes of metamorphosis and rebirth, move to the fore. If Tietjens could be thought of as Ford's Icarus, these late novels recall Cymbeline and Winter's Tale. Yet alongside this modulation from 'novel' to 'romance' went a surviving interest in what Ford called "subjects". Thus the unfinished trilogy was plainly marked by the economic depression of the inter-war years, The Rash Act being published only nine days before Roosevelt closed the banks. Vive Le Roy, similarly, is a response of some kind to the succession of French political crises which culminated in the fall of Daladier in February 1934. So, with their roots in contemporary history, Ford's last novels are scarcely comparable with Pinnegans Wake. (Ford himself had had this book in mind when he praised Joyce for his 'musicality'. Although Pinnegans Wake wasn't published till 1939, Ford was familiar enough with its prototype, Work in Progress.) The weakness of these late novels can't, then, be ascribed to their lack of any important subject-matter. Nor can we simply dismiss them on the grounds that Ford couldn't perfect the kind of non-linear, musical notation he admired in Work in Progress - which he had published as a supplement to the Transatlantic Review of April 1924. Perhaps it's more likely that there was a conflict of demands within Ford himself as, on the one hand, he attempted to emancipate himself, under Joyce's influence, from fiction's historicism while, on the other, remaining absorbed in the task of trying to explore contemporary realities through the form of the novel. Some of this tension can be glimpsed earlier, in the final volume of Parade's End, where Ford seemed to find it hard to reconcile the pressure of "words set in due order" that would round off the story of Christopher Tietjens, with his interest in the larger, fugal rhythms of birth and death.

Outside his fiction, though, many of Ford's final energies were certainly

devoted to a commentary upon the world around him, his views being set out most fully in Providence and The Great Trade Route. At the heart of these books lies Ford's belief that communities of "Small Producers" were the panacea for economic disaster and the polarisation of ideologies between Fascism and Communism. The Small Producer is defined in The Great Trade Route as

the man supporting himself and his family from his plot of ground and by the work of his hands...the man who with a certain knowledge of various crafts can set his hand to most kinds of work that go to the maintenance of humble existences...above all, he can produce and teach his family to produce good food according to the seasons...[and] keep his household supplied independent of the flux of currencies and the tides of world supplies - and...have a surplus for his neighbours. He is the insurance premium of his race. In short - a Man.<sup>5</sup>

Since these words were first written in 1937, many events have combined to reinforce our sense of the importance of economic self-sufficiency and the immorality of waste. The teachings of Ivan Illich and the establishment of many communes in the West have rendered Ford's ascriptions less bizarre than they must have seemed in 1937. And, for all their weaknesses, it must be said that there is a certain Horatian charm about Providence and The Great Trade Route. Part of this charm is indeed a function of the books' implausibilities. We can share what Graham Greene, writing of Providence, called Ford's "hilarious depression", only because of the difficulty of attending seriously to his philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Thus, although several of Ford's darker imaginings have since been borne out, his two books are full of local indifference to fact and coherent argument. For example, the dependence of his small communities upon a sophisticated, mechanised, urban society seems to have escaped his attention;

his communalists will, inexplicably, be able to enjoy movies and cars made in a mysterious elsewhere. Similarly, centres of political and economic power do exist in Ford's utopia, but he doesn't attend to the question of who will control such resources. And as Greene, again, has observed, the awkward facts that Hitler came from the south of Germany and that Italy was the first nation to break the post-war peace hardly accord with Ford's belief that the world will be resuscitated from the southern shores of Europe. Ford's Provençal heaven was built upon the shakiest of foundations.

None of this would matter very much if Ford's beliefs had inspired any major imaginative literature, in the way that Lawrence's "Dark Gods", Yeats' "Byzantium" or the agrarian simplicities of Eliot's After Strange Gods and The Idea of a Christian Society had creative results. But in Ford's case his philosophy was barren: he wrote no fiction of major importance after Parade's End. The explanation for this sterility doesn't lie in the improbabilities of his social criticism: the work of Balzac, alone, indicates that great fiction isn't dependent upon a coherent and plausible ideology. We may quarrel with Balzac's own royalism, but we cannot doubt that this was a serious response to post-Revolutionary France. Similarly with Yeats or Lawrence there can be no denying the weight of feeling behind their private myth-making. On the surface, too, Provence and The Great Trade Route appear to be deeply-felt responses to an era of political and economic crisis, which encouraged Douglas Goldring to find in them evidence of an admiration for the working-class and which suggested to a contemporary reviewer the novelist's "passionate hatred of cruelty and injustice, [his] profound sympathy with humanity".<sup>7</sup>

On closer inspection, however, it is precisely passion and deep sympathy which seem to be lacking in all Ford's work in the 'thirties. Thus the inaccuracies of detail and even of proposal could be overlooked in Provence and The Great Trade Route had Ford maintained a sense of perspective. Instead we find that beneath his leeching of mechanisation and political shrewdness lie

only the urges of the gourmet, so that the sole reference to "the Crisis" in Provence is couched in terms of its effect on Provençal cookery. Equally, reality is surely trivialised when Ford suggests in the same book that "there is no hope for us unless we reform the cooking at least of our rulers".<sup>8</sup> There were perhaps larger problems in Europe in the 'thirties than the diet of the ruling class. In similar vein, Ford's claim that both Lenin and Stalin supported his "Small Producer" philosophy appears to be an attempt to ignore their other claims upon his attention.<sup>9</sup> External reality, then, the world of unemployment and economic disaster, only seems to impinge upon Ford insofar as it can throw into relief the compensatory delights of the Mediterranean littoral.

Ford's philosophy in these years was founded on 'the gourmandisation of politics', the flattening of all ideological conflicts into questions of the cultivation, preparation and consumption of food. Yet we shouldn't conclude that Ford had elected to ridicule the problems of Europe as a front for any secret support of Fascism. On this count Ford's record, unlike some of his contemporaries', is unblemished. He publicly dissociated himself from Franco, offering his support to a Left Review pamphlet in 1937, and said about Hitler that he hoped

that the end of Mr. Hitler - and soon - may be a long stay in a cage in the Tiergarten of some small South German town.<sup>10</sup>

And so it's a serious oversimplification to claim that Ford's prejudices "were tending towards fascism in politics".<sup>11</sup> There is in fact no evidence that Ford demonstrated any affiliations with right-wing totalitarianism, nor does it illuminate the weakness of his fiction to place him amongst those English writers who were so attracted.

It's more probable that Ford's hatred embraced all politicians and the whole spectrum of available systems in the 'thirties. Consequently, his ideal

of communities of rural smallholders living in ecological frugality should be viewed less as an alternative to the bestialities of Hitler and Stalin than as a refuge, a sanctuary from them. "Aversion" and "weariness", the two words he had used to describe the cause of the novelist's retreat from "significance", were exactly the impulse that lay behind Ford's social criticism of this period. Very revealing in this context is the comment by Caroline Gordon that Ford and Janice Biala "seemed to inhabit a closed world" in the 'thirties.<sup>12</sup> This phrase rather effectively summarises our sense that all Ford's later writings, his social philosophy and his novels, were hermetically sealed from any contact with a living reality of exertion and disappointment. It was as if he wrote from a cocoon. Gordon's remark corresponds, too, with the metaphor Ford himself chose in It Was The Nightingale to describe art. "One's art", he wrote there,

is a small enclosed garden within whose high walls one moves administering certain manures and certain treatments in order to get certain effects...say of saxifrages against granite.<sup>13</sup>

The kitchen and the garden were the node of Ford's life and art after Parade's End, but beyond the "high walls" lay, in political terms, the strife and cruelty of Europe in the 'thirties. Beyond them, too, existed the "subjects" and "stories" in which he had been immersed in The Good Soldier and the Tietjens novels, and which he was now abandoning in favour of an art of "pure sound". There is, therefore, a thread connecting Ford's own life in his "closed world" with the changes that occurred in his aesthetic and social beliefs. In all three areas the destructive element from which he had fashioned Parade's End was now distanced by the erection of barriers behind which he cultivated the myth of an agrarian communalism and a fiction of improbability and incoherence. These myths of salvation woven by Yeats and Lawrence may have been, in some respects, unsalubrious, but they never

lacked purposefulness or vitality. By contrast, Ford's work of this decade seems consistently deoxygenated.

Vive Le Roy (1936), Ford's last novel, exemplifies the difficulties of creating fiction in a walled garden. The novel's insubstantiality, its air of willed fortuitousness, proves that the construction of narrative requires different skills from those directed to the juxtaposition of saxifrage and granite. The novel may be ornamental, but it lacks any solidity. Set in modern France during a Civil War between Royalists and Communists, Vive Le Roy tells of how a courier from the New York Communist Party, Walter Leroy, is kidnapped by the Royalists and substituted for their dead king in order to stabilise the regime after the defeat of the socialists. The Royalists are led by the benevolent de la Penthièvre and aim to establish France as a nation of Small Producers, ruled by a king and embodying Ford's own ideal "of a nation of rich peasant communities loosely linked under a central government presided over by an absolute monarch".<sup>14</sup> They are opposed from two sides - by the reactionaries, les gamelots du roi, under the leadership of Mung, and by the Communists of M. Arzipanopov, a figure whose very name exemplifies Ford's confusion of ideology with gastronomy. There are one or two good episodes in Vive Le Roy, as there are in all Ford's last novels - the scene in which the Communists, mistaking Leroy for the hated King, machine-gun his car, and the secret meeting of Leroy and his mistress in the depths of an old Parisian church - but the novel as a whole is marred by its basic implausibilities. We simply cannot believe that the likeable Leroy will suddenly abandon his "humanitarian form of Communism" in favour of cooperating with his Royalist captors.<sup>15</sup> Nor does Ford trouble to explain the process by which the Royalists will win over their recent opponents, of the Left and of the Right, and graft a pre-industrial organisation onto a twentieth-century, mechanised nation. Process, an account of the measured co-mingling of personality with event - so firmly embodied in



the first three volumes of Parade's End - is in short supply in all Ford's late novels.

Vive Le Roy seems, then, to lack any coherent centre, for it "cannot be taken seriously as either political criticism or detective story".<sup>16</sup> Ford admired the modern roman policier, especially Simenon's work, and indeed a Simenon novel is used in Vive Le Roy as a hiding-place for the dollars Leroy is importing from New York.<sup>17</sup> Yet Ford's novel lacks the tight spring of suspense developed in Simenon's best stories. At one point it even appears that Ford is using Vive Le Roy to parody Conrad's political novels: the improbable Arzipanopov carries a bomb in his pocket. But even as parody Vive Le Roy is limp, and it seems distinctly odd that Ford could have hoped to extract comic material from events as important as the Stavisky Scandal, the violent clashes between Right and Left on the Paris streets, and the general strike of February 12th, 1934. Plainly these were what had 'inspired' Ford, yet the manner of their fictional treatment would almost suggest that Ford didn't quite believe in what was happening at the time in France. The staccato style of Malraux's L'Esprit and its adult treatment of the political conflict was a full, energetic response to history. Ford, on the other hand, offers us a pantomimic version of reality, diminishing and denaturing the world around him and even passing up the chance to develop his own communist solutions. Vive Le Roy is, then, a failure, but a failure of a different kind from, say, The Benefactor or A Call. There, in the Edwardian novels, one could discern what Ford was attempting to do and could see them, with hindsight, as necessary sketches of The Good Soldier. Similarly the disappointing Maradan Case is comprehensible as an embryonic form, tentative and exploratory, of the Tietjens quartet. Now, however, with Vive Le Roy and with Ford's other three late novels, it's very difficult to see what Ford was aiming to achieve. All of them lack cohesiveness, dramatic intensity or narrative responsibility. All

seem recklessly private.

And yet even when the failures of these novels have been recorded we cannot help noticing how close are the parallels between the weaknesses of Ford's fiction and what he felt to be the strengths of his communalist utopia. That is to say, the leisurely meanderings which we condemn in the novels are analogous to that life of creative leisure Ford was adumbrating in Provence and The Great Trade Route. Here, in Ford's imagined world, his Small Producers would complete their work in field and vineyard and use the bulk of their time,

all [their] afternoons and evenings and most of the winter months for the movies, the theatres, the concert halls, the churches, the night clubs, the dancing floors...for field sports, hitch-hiking, for distant travel. Or even for the Arts.<sup>18</sup>

All this may be impossibly idealistic, but it's not far away from the spirit of randomness and haphazardness that characterises the form of his fiction in the 'thirties. There's no point in trying to salvage this fiction, yet we may still want to observe that there is a real problem of fictional aesthetics in trying to embody these rhythms of creative langour in the form of the European novel, with all its teleological assumptions.

Between Last Post and his death in 1939 Ford was plainly concerned in trying to advocate a very different kind of social order from that which had already led to one major war and was, he feared, going to produce a second. What he desired in its place was a community based on traditional observance and on political and religious stabilities; homogenous rather than fissiparous, rural rather than urban. This ideal is close to Ferdinand Tönnies' sense of a "Gemeinschaft" social order:

Here men tend to function through traditional status arrangements, and to live by certain willing renunciations -

by ideologies that encourage them to adjust to their lot, restrain excessive aspiration, and fulfil themselves through inherited roles, patterns of conduct, and a cohesive sense of community. They act and know one another through a series of face-to-face contacts, spread through various types of social occasion (work and religion, home and family). They share a more or less common culture or body of values, and have more need of religion than sociology.<sup>19</sup>

All this is strikingly like the kind of life Ford had designed for Tietjens and Valentine in Last Post and which he amplified in the essays of Providence and The Great Trade Route. Its political implausibility is of secondary interest, in a study of Ford's fiction, to the fact that a social order of this type has never articulated itself through the literary medium of the novel. Gemeinschaft societies have, rather, been celebrated in different artistic modes: those of the dance or of music, or, where verbalised as in the case of the Homeric epics and the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf, in the form of a highly stylised, formulaic poetry. Indeed in the conventional histories of western fiction the European novel is seen as part of a widespread cultural and political revolution from the gemeinschaft societies of feudalism. Certainly that body of English fiction, from Defoe, Fielding and Richardson onwards, has mediated an 'open' society, whose characteristic features weren't remission and restraint but an aggressive mobility, aspiration and consumption. In the second chapter of The English Novel Ford himself had unravelled some of the connections between the demise of feudalism and the flowering of the eighteenth-century novel, later to be substantiated by Ian Watt. He argued that the novel of this period was the product of improvements in education in the Grammar Schools and of social factors such as the invention of printing and the spread of wealth and leisure.

However, at some stage in the late 'twenties, perhaps just before he wrote Last Post, Ford seems finally to have decided that societies built on these same principles of individualistic advancement and capitalist productivity, Max Weber's 'Protestant' societies, were bankrupt. Like Lawrence, Ford searched for an alternative world, finding his particular solution in an idealised version of the life of a Provençal smallholder. The impracticability of these visions is beside the point, for the central, unresolved artistic problem for Ford as a novelist was bound up in the tension between the novel as a genre and the kind of life which the fiction was endeavouring to celebrate. Already this stress had been marked in Parade's End, where the historicist form of the first three volumes was unsuitable for rendering the communal and seasonal rhythms of Last Post. In the 'thirties, with Ford experimenting with a verbal form that would possess the "absolute" freedom of music, his problems deepened, so that it's hardly surprising that his two travelogues, Provence and The Great Trade Route, should be superior to his fiction. In the rambling topographical essay Ford had the leisure to back-track, digress or stop for meditation. Even though these two books are replete with inaccuracies and oversimplifications, their form, the traveller's monologue, permitted Ford to capture something of the spirit of the world he was imagining, where the rhythms of work and leisure

were dictated by the seasons and the weather, and which reflected a ritual interpretation of life, with fiestas and fasts, high days and low days.<sup>20</sup>

However, when these same cycles were given a narrative form they appeared only slack and enervated.

Like Woolf and Lawrence, Ford was searching for an extension of fiction that would lead the novel away from its sociological roots and in the direction of music or ritual. In Ford's case the exploration was in vain, but it does

provide evidence of his refusal ever to remain satisfied with an achieved perfection. Thus, after the Tudor trilogy he was never to return to the historical novel, nor was The Good Soldier ever repeated. Similarly, after the success of Parade's End, Ford was still restless and ambitious.

Notterdam, the hero of When the Wicked Man, is, like Tietjens, living under great financial and marital strain as a publisher in New York, where

Every human being that he knew, even to the nicest, softest and simplest of women, lived in a perpetual rustle of newspaper leaves being rapidly turned over to see how such and such a stock had most lately fared.<sup>21</sup>

This sentence perhaps suggests the similarity between the situations of Tietjens and Notterdam. When the Wicked Man could have been no more than a recapitulation of the theme of the victim hounded by his family and society. As such, it might have been a better novel, but Ford was always ready to sacrifice success to exploration and experiment.

When he was buried in Dearville cemetery in 1939, only three friends attended the ceremony: by boldly moving onwards after Parade's End Ford had lost that audience the Tietjens novels had secured him. At his death he left unfinished a novel about the leftist intelligentsia of the 'thirties. Its provisional title, "Left Turn", is an appropriate memorial to a novelist who had spent his life espousing new directions for fiction and in two works had led by example.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

- 1 Graham Greene, Review of The March of Literature, Spectator,  
CLXXIII (November 17, 1939), cited in Harvey, p. 429.
- 2 MOL, p. 301.
- 3 Ibid., p. 302.
- 4 EN, p. 21.
- 5 GR, pp. 188/9.
- 6 Graham Greene, Review of Provence, London Mercury, XXXIX  
(December 1938), 217/8, cited in Harvey, p. 422.
- 7 Goldring, South Lodge, pp. 220/1; A. G. Macdonnell, Review of  
Great Trade Route, Observer (January 7, 1937), 4, cited in  
Harvey, p. 409.
- 8 PROV, p. 71.
- 9 GR, pp. 78/9.
- 10 Harvey, p. 100; PROV, p. 332; Goldring, The Last Pre-Raphaelite,  
p. 271.
- 11 Lionel Stevenson, The History of the English Novel (New York, 1967),  
XI, 86; the comment was made about VIR.
- 12 Wisener, p. 425.
- 13 IAN, p. 127.
- 14 VIR, p. 243.
- 15 Ibid., p. 245.
- 16 Hoffmann, p. 139.
- 17 MFS, p. 95; MOL, p. 759.
- 18 GR, p. 194.
- 19 The account is taken from Malcolm Bradbury, The Social Context of  
Modern English Literature (Oxford, 1971), p. 9.
- 20 John Vaisey, Revolutions of our Time: Capitalism (London, 1971), p. 97.
- 21 VIR, p. 67.



Chapter Nine

The Shape of An Achievement

Academic criticism of the novel has commonly appeared to be preoccupied with the notion of 'failure', or, more precisely, with the frequent phenomenon of the novelist whose handful of major works is surrounded by a larger number of less successful novels. There has been widespread interest in the co-existence of success and failure. Melville and Twain, Wells and Bennett are all novelists of this kind, writers whose oeuvres are internally uneven, spanning the whole range between the achieved masterpieces of Moby Dick or Mayhanger and the ineffective Pierre or Imperial Palace. Criticism has developed the instruments for distinguishing confidently between the great and the mediocre novel, and yet these same tools haven't proved as helpful in explaining why the same novelist should have created such disparate works, often within a few years of each other. In critical accounts of this type of novelist we may often discern that hostility towards the 'failure' outweighs any gratitude for the minority of the achievements. We may even suspect from such readings that the academic critic is too inclined to overlook the weight of the odds stacked against any writer producing a novel of decisive, central importance: achievement is always so less likely than failure.

There is, though, another 'species' of novelist, a group that would include Austen, Turgenev, Flaubert, Joyce and Henry James, the shape of whose achievement is of a quite different kind. None of these writers perhaps ever published a novel unequivocally a failure: there are demonstrable degrees of achievement in the work of an Austen or a James, yet these variations all lie within a quite narrow band. Possibly, indeed, this kind of accomplishment in fiction, the creation of an orderly, classical body of work that betrays no sign of a loose end or a ragged hem, has even established itself as a generic ideal, a touchstone by which the seasons of other novelists are judged.

If this were in fact true, it would go some way to explaining why critics of the novel have been less able to negotiate oeuvres that are essentially disorderly and incoherent. All the same, some doubt must remain as to whether this is in fact the most appropriate paradigm for the novel. Does the nature of fiction since the eighteenth century lead overwhelmingly to the view that the model achievement is the novelist's construction of a group of works that is Consistent, integral and coherent? Or isn't it more likely that, because of fiction's interest in the contingent and the inconclusive, the more usual pattern in any novelist's work will be revealed as uneven, jagged and fragmented? The perfect symmetry in the Austen canon, where the structural felicities within each of the six novels expand so that they almost seem to be six chapters of a single novel, is always closer to the impulses of the lyric poet than to the majority of novelists. Perhaps, then, a case can be made for adjusting our expectations when we consider the totality of a novelist's work. Conceivably we should be more tolerant of the declivities in any body of novels. We ought to be able to register the ineffective novels without allowing them to detract from the magnitude of the peaks in a career.

Considerations of this kind, of how we deal with a mass of separate novels that are the constituents of a single body of work, are aroused by the comments of Ford Madox Ford's most recent biographer, Arthur Mizener, when, in the Preface to The Saddest Story, he argues that the central problem is "why Ford's achievement was not what his gifts would lead us to expect".<sup>1</sup> It's true that Ford did leave us a considerable number of undistinguished novels scattered throughout his career, but it's scarcely a central function of criticism to use the procedures of the book-keeping professions, whereby a major novel in the 'credit column' is nullified by two or three failures among the 'debit' entries. The whole exercise smacks a little of auditing: major novels oughtn't to be

jeopardised in this way, simply because they are surrounded by work that hasn't survived and can't be revived. On the contrary, Ford's achievement should be recognised as being large and permanent: five novels, The Good Soldier and the four parts of Parade's End, that are indisputably of major stature, and three historical novels that are assured, successful, secondary works. Quantitatively, this achievement is less than Lawrence's or James's, but nevertheless five novels as good as The Good Soldier and Some Do Not... are no meagre harvest. Very few novelists in any generation possess "gifts" in such abundance that we are led to expect from them more than Ford himself actually wrought. Ford's achievement would have been no larger had he suppressed all the other, lesser, novels, since the latter in no way diminish the stature of the few successes. We are better occupied in renewing our understanding of Ford's accomplishments than in speculating about the causes of the abortive works.

The number, then, of twentieth-century novelists capable of an achievement as decisive as that implied by the creation of The Good Soldier and Parade's End is small: many, though, have been able to write at the level of, say, Ford's The Panel or The New Hamlet-Dumpty. However, even when tribute has been paid and distinctions drawn, Ford's career does still present us with certain problems. It's not really a question, though, of why the achievement was less than the potential, but rather of the nature of the achievement itself. What kind of novelist, that is to say, was Ford? Where do we place him in relation to his contemporaries? The typology of fiction's last two generations, as presently constituted, scarcely finds a place for Ford. His neighbours and confrères seem not to be found in either of the two main groupings of novelists first formulated by Virginia Woolf in that celebrated essay on fiction. Perhaps indeed it's an integral element of Ford's work that it does emphasize the limitations of the conventional map-making.

Ford himself patently aspired to be affiliated with James, Conrad and the modernists: in these writers he invested his admiration and affection. Yet the regularity with which he betrayed their austere ideals for fiction, by publishing work that appeared to ignore the theories he shared and the practice (Mostrano or What Maisie Knew) he had publicly applauded, seems to mark Ford off as a fundamentally different breed of novelist. M. D. Zabel has described Ford's canon as "the incessant outpourings of a polygraph", but polygraphy is deeply antipathetic to the austere prudential ideals of modernism.<sup>2</sup> The economic imperatives on Ford to publish were doubtless real enough, but the argument that he was thus forced to produce too many 'pot-boilers' doesn't dispel our suspicion that his prolificacy had deeper causes. Economy and thrift were central tenets in the aesthetics of James and Conrad, and Ford

himself practised these outstandingly in The Good Soldier. Nevertheless the nature of Ford's canon, the bulk of his published work, the variety of topics to which he addressed himself and the plurality of modes he adopted (the memoir, art-criticism, travelogue, children's books, as well as poetry and fiction), all this heterogeneity implies that Ford's creative energies were basically centrifugal. It suggests too that Ford would have written in this same manner, diffusely and prodigally, even if he had been supplied with economic independence.

In a very early book, Ford Madox Brown, the biography of his grandfather, the painter, Ford had begun to try to establish himself as belonging to a long line of innovators, which he traces back as far as Dr. John Brown, a radical physician. However, the record of his published work would suggest that Ford's true affinities lay more with earlier polygraphs, such as Ruskin or Carlyle, than with those of his contemporaries, James and Conrad, who valued above all introspection and self-denial. The centrality of self in all Ford's work - our inability ever quite to forget the presence of Ford the personality - marks him off crucially from Conrad or James. We can read the whole of Notre-Dame or The Portrait of a Lady without being invited or seduced to muse about the 'personality' of the author as we know of it from the works of Baines and Edel. True, we're always conscious on every page that we're reading Conrad or James, but their novels don't possess that compelling personal dimension which is never absent from a Ford novel, even from his best works. Ford perhaps had no sense of literary privacy. His memoirs give evidence of how his rarefied upbringing had implanted in him a very early consciousness of self. Ford was born into "a dynasty of highly-gifted celebrities" and his books suggest that he could never quite forget this pedigree.<sup>3</sup> The effect of this primitive self-consciousness is that Ford always strikes us as a theatrical figure, a man ever conscious of himself

and the reverberations he is causing on those around him. This is a trait of Christopher Tietjens' character which Ford, as we have noted, caught very well in Parade's End, but Tietjens in the hotel at Rouen is very close to the young Ford as he's recorded in the pages of Olive Garnett's diary in the 'nineties. Olive's mother had called one day on Ford Madox Brown to see his latest painting and had asked the old man if he were going to begin his next cartoon:

Mr. Brown said "Yes, I see no reason why I should not begin, but my grandson Ford [then aged 18] says that I must design a frontispiece for his novel, & that he can't wait, so I suppose I had better begin sketching it out to-night".

The frame of the picture is of wood covered with gilt Japanese paper so the people who did not know what to say admired it, which amused Ford immensely. He it appears stood like an iceberg in the middle of the room & behaved with great ceremony.<sup>4</sup>

Now it's true that neither James nor Conrad was the most modest of men, but the arrogance recorded in their lives doesn't impinge upon their fiction as it does constantly with Ford. The latter, surely, stands like an iceberg in the middle of his novels and there behaves with great ceremony. This determination to dominate, this preoccupation with establishing his own character, with 'making an impression', is closely connected with the prolixity and plurality of his output: it was as if he had to 'have his say' on everything.

Such egotism - which, like Willoughby Patterne's, perhaps covered a deep lack of confidence - is only of interest to us now insofar as it affected the nature of Ford's novels. In the fictional techniques they employed The Good Soldier and Parade's End may be two, very different, monuments of modernism. Yet they are successful not because Ford there succeeded in expunging his



own personality, in accordance with modernist aesthetics, but rather because he found a way of expressing through them the tensions of his own life and times. The aesthetic of modernism as it was variously adumbrated by Hulme, Eliot and Joyce, isn't exemplified at its purest in The Good Soldier or the Tietjens novels, for we are frequently conscious of Ford's personal obsessions lying immediately under their surface. In this connection it's significant that much of the critical attention paid the novels has been directed to issues of characterisation: how honest is Dowell?; how credible is Tietjens? At the heart of such questions lies the larger issue of Ford's own relationship with his characters. We don't feel that he has dissociated himself from Dowell or Tietjens as radically as Joyce did from Bloom and Stephen. The 'heuristic' quality of the novels, Ford's use of them as vehicles for self-discovery and self-expression, would then align them more closely with the work of the realists, Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy.

Its heterogeneity, unevenness, and the absence of a modernist authorial displacement are all, then, qualities which would seem to make Ford's work rather traditional and orthodox. Like Wells and Bennett, Ford also dispersed his energies outwards, away from the autocratic centralising drives of Conrad or James. However, in other important respects Ford seems very unlike Wells or Bennett. Nowhere in Ford is there any interest in the portrayal of childhood, adolescence or, in the widest sense, 'education'. Neither is Ford centrally concerned with parenthood, the relationship between work and private life, or the effects of 'place' (as Wells' suburbia or Bennett's provinces) on the individual. These are all important constituents in the realistic fiction of the early part of the century quite absent from Ford. In their place we discover a fascination with isolation (Katharine in The Fifth Queen, Tietjens, Dowell); with marital discord; and, above all perhaps, with the concept of 'honour' among a land-owning upper-middle-class. The centre of Ford's work is occupied by the struggle between a retroactive idealism and the gritty unsympathetic materialism of the present. By contrast Wells and Bennett were materialists, fascinated by the texture of daily life, by growth and process. A recent critic has distinguished Ford from these realist contemporaries because he didn't write "from a fairly central concern with English life and manners. Compared with these, the half-German Ford does seem exotic."<sup>5</sup>

By the side of Wells, Bennett and Forster, Ford seems, precisely, "exotic" just because he didn't write out of a deep intimacy with English middle-class mores. There is no equivalent indeed in Ford's work to the dense, particularised 'Sawston' of early Forster or Bennett's 'Five Towns'. Dowell and Tietjens seem, in contrast, adrift figures, men exiled from their fictive roots in the land-owning gentry of Hampshire or Cleveland.

Like Forster's Schlegel family in Howards End, the Hueffers were recent émigrés from Germany, and the lack of deep English roots, on this side of his family, seems to account for much of the externality of Ford's view of his adopted homeland. In his immigrant status Ford was similarly placed to several of the leading writers of the age: the Polish Conrad; James, Eliot and Pound from America; and Yeats and Joyce from Ireland. He's unlike them, however, in that Germany evidently provided him with no models or pressures in the way that Poland, America and Ireland made themselves variously felt for his contemporaries. The memory of his German roots is not a felt presence in Ford's work. Terry Eagleton has argued that the other exiles all had alternative cultures and traditions to set up against the social erosion they perceived in England, "broader frameworks against which, in a highly creative tension, the erosion of contemporary order could be situated and partially understood".<sup>6</sup> Germany didn't offer itself to Ford in this way, as providing a vantage-point from which to survey and grasp the English panorama. Eagleton's thesis was that it was possible for the 'aliens' to achieve a controlled evaluation of English society in transition during and soon after the First World War because of "an awareness that the declining culture they confronted was in no full sense their own". Their major art was produced

not from the simple availability of an alternative [culture], but from the subtle and involuted tensions between the remembered and the real, the potential and the actual, integration and dispossession, exile and involvement.<sup>7</sup>

Ford differs, decisively, from this celebrated group in that he was not born, reared and educated outside England. He couldn't, therefore, call upon those linguistic and cultural vestiges that were located for Conrad in Podolia and Cracow.

What Ford did, instead, was to create for himself an alternate tradition, a matrix of social and cultural experiences, some real, others invented, that functioned in much the same way as Conrad's 'Poland', James' 'Boston' or Eliot's 'St. Louis'. His German ancestry couldn't provide him with what Joyce gleaned from Dublin. But equally his English upbringing as a 'poor relation' of the Rossettis, a life that was nomadic and rootless, didn't supply him with that purchase upon indigenous realities which was the heritage of Wells and Bennett. So, in these circumstances, Ford had to invent his own life, and the purpose of the various volumes of memoir and autobiography was to give substance to the fabrication. His inveterate myth-making can best be seen as a continuing attempt to furnish himself with a base from which to survey and understand a country that he never fully felt to be his own. Although the myth he built for himself was inchoate and inconsistent, its central element lay in Ford's desire to be viewed as a member of the English establishment, educated at public-school and university. Thus Ford wrote, in a magazine article in September 1914,

I am a very unfortunate man. For I came into, and took very seriously, English public-school life at a time when English public-school spirit - in many ways the finest product of a civilisation - was already on the wane. I took its public traditions with extraordinary seriousness - the traditions of responsibilities, duties, privileges, and no rights....It is still engrained in my bones - the idea that I must give unceasingly all that I have to the world, and that in return some day, with luck, some one will spoil me a little....That luck has not much come my way yet.<sup>8</sup>

This willed incorporation of the philosophy of Noblesse oblige, so unlike the way in which a member of this class would really have written about

himself in 1914, came to have for Ford the same verisimilitude as Conrad's Polish upbringing. In reality a descendant of the German bourgeoisie, Ford took on the assumptions of the well-born Englishman. Indeed he claimed to be the only survivor of a race now extinct, the only Englishman who still believed in the "exploded traditions" of an earlier age. The conditions of exile and dispossession in which Conrad, James and the others worked were real and spatial, but, because Germany could not function for Ford in this way, he had to manufacture for himself an alienation that was in essence temporal and historical. While the other modernist aliens were finding creative substance in the memory of another country, Ford placed his ideals in another, imaginary, age. It is, then, quite true that "reminiscence was the characteristic mode of Ford's thought".<sup>9</sup>

Ford's main preoccupation as a novelist lay in the dissociation of power and principle. Indeed his most permanent works are extended metaphors of this conflict between physical dominance and moral integrity. Authority, as personified by Henry VIII in the Tudor Trilogy, by Leonora in The Good Soldier and by Parade's End's General Campion, is pragmatic, relativist, essentially unscrupulous. Ford's heroes, those who oppose the dominant power, Katharine, Ashburnham and Tietjens, embody different values, absolutist and idealist. During the same period, between about 1910 and 1927, Forster and Lawrence were also active in criticising the sexual and economic hegemony, yet they differed essentially from Ford in that they drew their sustaining values from sources outside the dominant culture - the Schlegel sisters, say, or Birkin. Ford is a more complex case insofar as he employed parodistic versions of the ruling class itself as a means of delineating the moral inertia of that class. There's a vivid illustration of this procedure in the conversation between Campion and Sylvia Tietjens in No More Parades, where the former is interrogating Sylvia about her husband's principles:

"...But what, then, is it that Christopher has said?..."

Hang it all: what is at the bottom of that fellow's mind?..."

"He desires", Sylvia said, and she had no idea when she said it, "to model himself upon Our Lord..."

The general leant back in the sofa. He said almost indulgently:

"Who's that...Our Lord?"

Sylvia said:

"Upon Our Lord Jesus Christ..."

He sprang to his feet as if she had stabbed him with a hat-pin.



"Cur..." he exclaimed. "Good God!...I always knew he had a screw loose...But..." He said briskly: "Give all his goods to the poor!...But He Wasn't a...not a socialist! What was it He said: Render unto Caesar...It wouldn't be necessary to drum Him out of the army..." He said: "Good Lord!...Good Lord!... Of course his poor dear mother was a little...But, hang it!... The Wannop girl!..." Extreme discomfort overcame him...Tietjens was half-way across from the inner room, coming towards them.<sup>10</sup>

This episode, a scene of magnificent high comedy, effectively underlines that the values of a Christian civilisation, which Campion purports to be defending against German barbarism, in truth reside in Christopher, the pariah of the ruling-class. Ford's tactics, then, were hyperbolic: he drew stylised, exaggerated pictures of the dominant class, in order to demonstrate the moral bankruptcy of that group. As Walter Benjamin said of Baudelaire, Ford was a "secret agent" of the social and economic rulers, exposing from within, rather than, as Forster and Lawrence did, from without.<sup>11</sup> By overstating the chivalric disinterestedness of his heroes Ford found an effective way of recording the self-interest of the establishment.

Ford's style of perception and notation was, then, frankly non-mimetic, and so, instead of thinking of his affinities with realists such as Wells and Bennett or with the impressionistic Conrad, we may come closer to the nature of his fiction if we suggest its kinship with Expressionist modes. In Art and Society Herbert Read has advanced definitions of pictorial Expressionism that may be helpful in defining Ford's achievement in fiction. Expressionism, Read wrote,

is that type of art which strives to depict, not the objective facts of nature, nor any abstract notion based on these facts, but the subjective feelings of the artist. It is, by definition, individualistic...

and, furthermore,

Expressionism lives up to its name; that is to say, it expresses the emotions of the artist at any cost - the cost being usually an exaggeration or distortion of natural appearances which borders on the grotesque. Caricature is a department of expressionism, and one which most people find no difficulty in appreciating. But when caricature is carried to the pitch and organization of a composite in oils, or a piece of sculpture, then people begin to revolt. The artist is no longer 'appealing' to them - he is not flattering their vanities nor satisfying their super-egoistic idealism in any way. He is openly in revolt against the conventions of the normal conception of reality and is endeavouring to create a vision of reality more strictly in accordance with his own emotional reactions to experience.<sup>12</sup>

These remarks, though wrenched from their intended application to a different, plastic, art, have some power to elucidate Ford's narrative modes. Certainly his methods of characterization were close to those of the caricaturist, and Read's comments on the privacy and the individualistic nature of the Expressionist's "vision of reality" are congruent with our frequent sense that Ford wasn't interested in rendering the external world of the realists. Ford's various memoirs, too, were essentially Expressionist works that portrayed - often to the anger of the involved reader - the past as Ford himself saw it, in preference to any objective, 'photographic' rendering. The persona Ford built for himself, so knowing and asignoral with its emphasis on inner worlds of subjective feeling rather than on objective description, and its projection of extreme mental states, had something in common with the work of Marsh or Kokoschka.

Ford's weakest novels were ineffective just because they did seem so private, quirky and lacking in any public reverberations. Novels such as Mr. Flaubert or The New Humpty-Dumpty had invested so heavily in the depiction of extreme and violent mental conditions that when these failed to prove resonant, the reader had nothing else to fall back upon. In fiction, Expressionist forms must always be intrinsically more vulnerable, more problematic, than "classical realism" or its descendants. On the other hand, Ford's indubitably major work, The Good Soldier and Parade's End, succeeds because the embattled mental states there presented were found to epitomise certain communal or national neuroses of the time. It was, in other words, no accident that The Good Soldier coincided with a period of acute pre-war crisis for a particular class, nor that Parade's End, likewise, depicted an abnormally dangerous national emergency. In both these cases, then, Ford's eccentric vision overlapped more generally perceived structures of feeling. The relative infrequency with which Ford managed to create novels of such permanence must be connected with the demands of the genre in which he was working. It's hardly surprising that Expressionist artists, those for whom their own subjective feelings were the true subject-matter of their work, should so rarely have turned to the novel, for this is the genre with the closest affiliations to history. As J. Willis Miller has acutely observed, "the notions of narrative, of character, and of formal unity in fiction are all congruent with the system of concepts making up the Western idea of history".<sup>13</sup> In his rare, isolated masterpieces Ford Madox Ford discovered a way of voicing, in 1915 and again in the mid-'twenties, the widespread suspicion towards European historicist beliefs.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER NINE

- 1 Mizener, p. xvi.
- 2 M. D. Zabel, Craft and Character in Modern Fiction  
(London, 1957), p. 259.
- 3 Douglas Goldring, The Last Pre-Raphaelite, p. 18.
- 4 Thomas C. Moser, "From Olive Garnett's Diary: Impressions  
of Ford Madox Ford and his Friends, 1890-1906," Texas Studies  
in Literature and Language, XVI, iii (Fall 1974), 516.
- 5 Bernard Bergonzi, The Turn of a Century: Essays on  
Victorian and Modern English Literature (London, 1973), p. 145.
- 6 Terry Eagleton, Exiles and Emigres: Studies in Modern  
Literature (London, 1970), p. 15. See further, the same  
author's "Ideology and Literary Form," New Left Review, XC  
(March-April 1975), 81/109.
- 7 Eagleton, Exiles and Emigres, p. 18.
- 8 "Literary Portraits - LV: Trimalchio," Outlook, XXXIV  
(September 26, 1914), 399/400, cited in Harvey, p. 202.
- 9 R. W. Lid, Ford Madox Ford: The Essence of His Art  
(Berkeley, 1964), p. 14.
- 10 NMP, p. 417.
- 11 "There is little point in trying to include the position of a  
Baudelaire in the fabric of the most advanced position in mankind's  
struggle of liberation. From the outset it seems more promising  
to investigate his machinations where he undoubtedly is at home -  
in the enemy camp. Very rarely are they a blessing for the  
opposite side. Baudelaire was a secret agent - an agent of the  
secret discontent of his class with its own rule": Walter  
Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High  
Capitalism (London, 1973), p. 104, fn. 1.
- 12 Herbert Read, Art and Society (London, 1967), pp. 118, 119.
- 13 J. Hillis Miller, "Narrative and History," English Literary  
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B. SECONDARY SOURCES

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2. Collections and Anthologies
3. Books and Articles on Ford
4. The Critical Background
5. The Historical Context

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